

**BASEBALL
POSTER
BONUS**

**KEN GRIFFEY JR.
& NOLAN RYAN**

THE HOT TEAMS TO WATCH IN THE NBA PLAYOFFS

SPECIAL SECTION: YOUR NFL DRAFT GUIDE

SPORT

MAY
1991
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INSIDE BASEBALL!

**The Key
Players On
Each Team
Who MUST
Come
Through**

ROGER CLEMENS

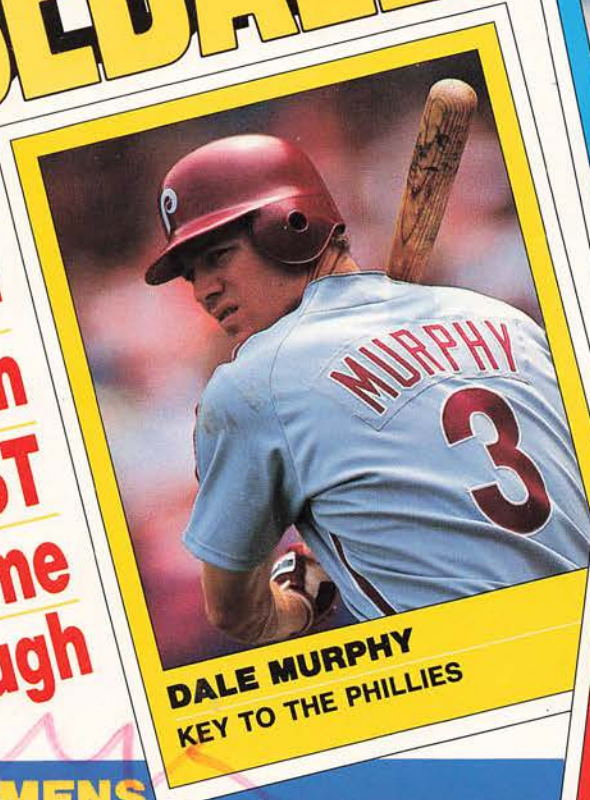
The SPORT Q&A

JAMES WORTHY

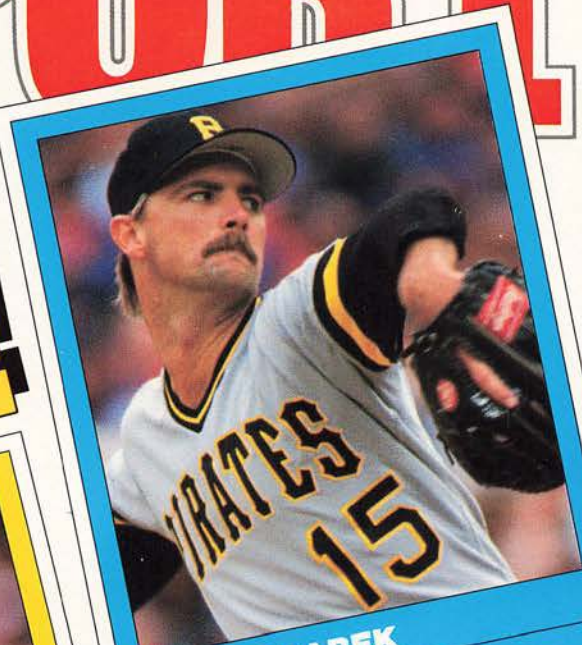
A Class Act in the NBA

GEORGE FOREMAN

The Next Heavyweight Champion?



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KEY TO THE PHILLIES



DOUG DRABEK
KEY TO THE PIRATES



CAL RIPKEN JR.
KEY TO THE ORIOLES

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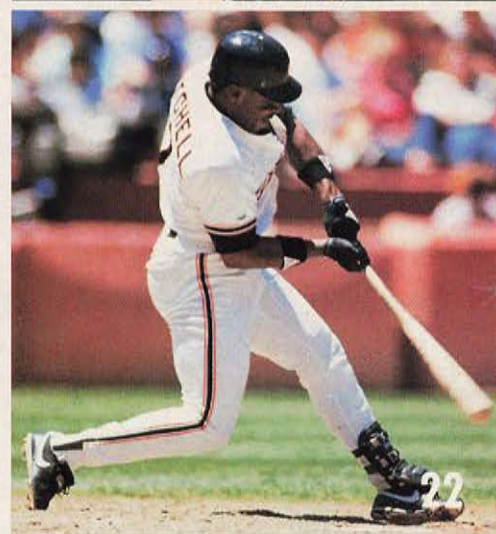
*Pour 1½ oz. of Southern Comfort into a tall
glass over ice. Fill with your favorite soda.*



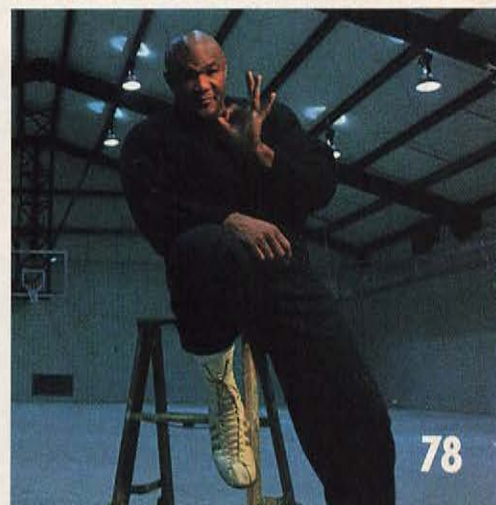
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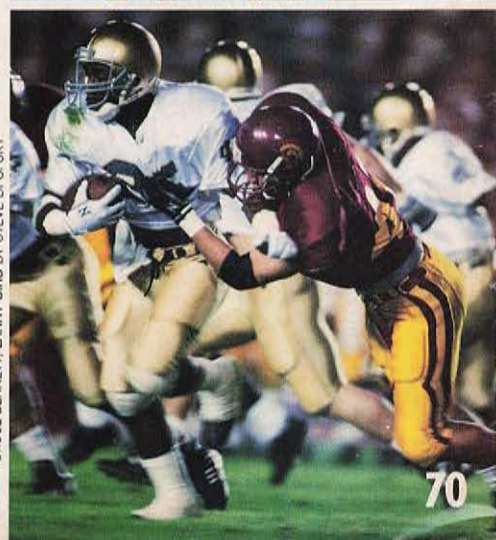
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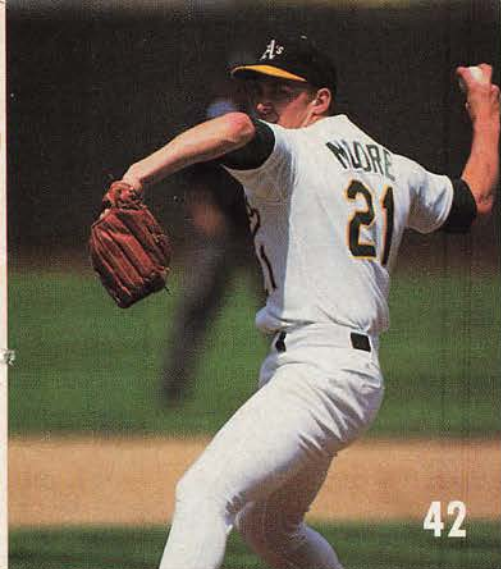
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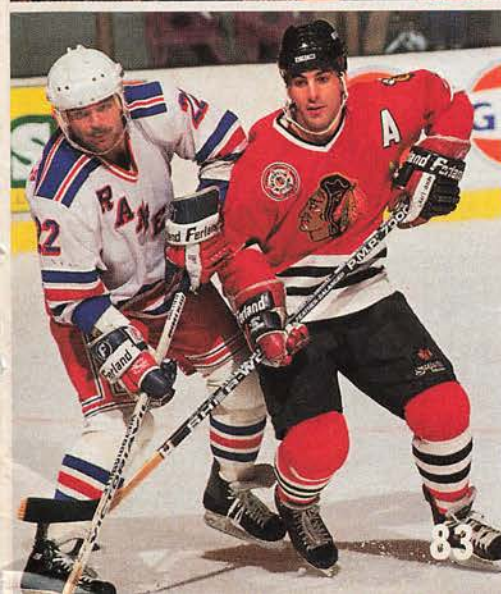
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SPORT

MAY 1991



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"IT LOOKS LIKE WE SAVED THE ORPHANAGE,
ALL YOU NEEDED WAS A LITTLE FAITH."



FATHER.

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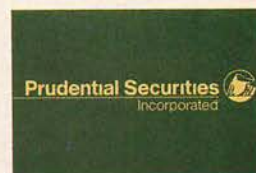
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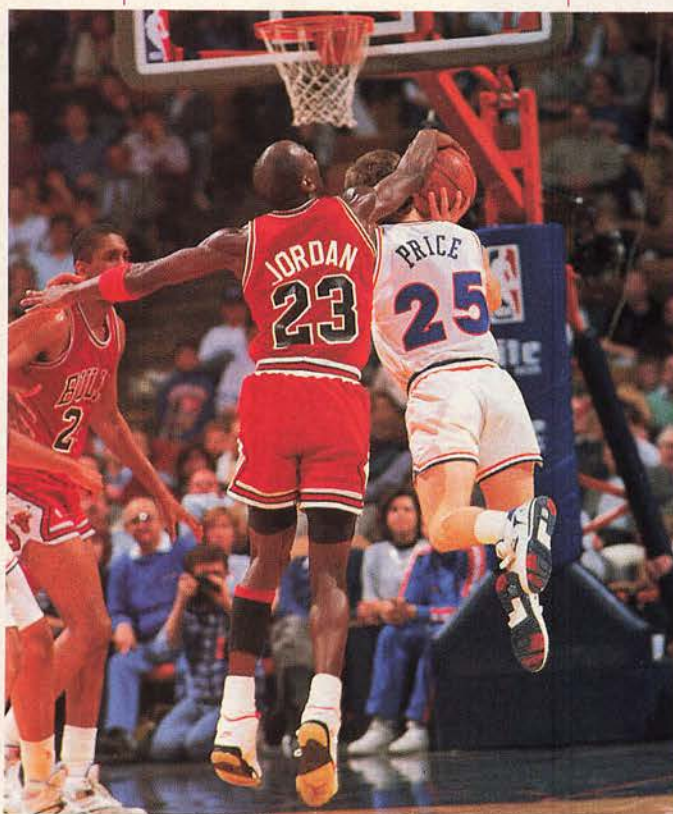
DON'T MESS WITH MICHAEL

Several letter writers in the March **SPORT** made critical remarks about Michael Jordan (pictured), claiming he was "... nothing but a ball hog" and questioning his credentials as a winner in comparison to Magic Johnson and Larry Bird ("If Jordan is as good as you say, why can't he lead the Bulls to the NBA Finals?"). Ball hog? He is averaging 6.0 assists per game in his career, while the average guard hands out 4.2. If six assists a game is considered ball hogging, all guards must be ball hogs. And though I agree that Magic and Bird are two of the best to ever play, it's not fair to compare the Bulls to the Lakers and the Celtics. Magic won his titles playing with the likes of Worthy, Abdul-Jabbar, McAdoo, Cooper, Scott. Bird won his with Dennis Johnson, Parish, McHale. Who couldn't win a title with those guys? On the other hand, Michael was drafted by a nowhere team with no star players. Yet since his arrival, the Bulls have become a perennial playoff team. So, logically, Michael has brought the Bulls farther than Bird or Magic brought their teams.

Lincoln H. Stromness
Sandy, Utah

We agree with your general point, but we should point out that in the six seasons before Magic joined the Lakers and took them to the championship, L.A. had not made it to the finals and made it past the second round of the playoffs only once. The year before Bird joined the Celtics and led them to the NBA's best regular-season record (61-21), Boston had the second-worst record in the NBA at 29-53.

I was appalled by the negative comments about Jordan. Not a complete player? How many times have we seen his teammates accomplish nothing on offense and end up passing the ball to



him, making it necessary for him to force a shot with little time left on the shot clock? The amazing thing is that he usually makes it. Instead of criticizing the best player of all time, we should be enjoying his remaining years of greatness.

Rob Harrington
Greenville, North Carolina

Selfish? One-dimensional? MJ won the MVP and Defensive Player of the Year in the same year (1988). Last year, he made the NBA All-Defensive First Team for the third straight year. He was the team leader in assists and one of the Bulls' top rebounders. And he's the only player ever to block more than 100 shots and have 200 steals in the same season (he's done it twice). When was the last time Magic or Bird did any of those things?

James Young
Detroit, Michigan

RATING RICKEY

Ron Kroichick's masterpiece on Rickey Henderson ("Man of Steal," March) is

the best work about Henderson I've ever read. Even if you didn't know who Rickey was before reading the article, you can't finish it without being a Rickey Henderson fan.

Stefan Chi
Austin, Texas

My compliments to Ron Kroichick for a wonderful job. I think Henderson could get those 1,200 steals. He's unstoppable and unbelievable. And **SPORT** wrote it all down perfectly.

Trent Diehl
Lodi, California

CROWNING KEN GRIFFEY JR.

I have to fully congratulate Claire Smith on her article on Ken Griffey Jr. ("Hey, Junior," March). His awesome ability is matched only by his love for his dad on and off the field. Thanks for the enjoyable reading.

Mark Peters
Litchfield, Minnesota

You mention in your article that Griffey has been "coronated." There is no such word in my dictionary. A person who receives a crown is "crowned." There's no verb "to coronate." Granted, though, there is no knowing what may appear in the new and, to put it mildly, promiscuous *Random House Dictionary*.

Rory Foran
Glen Burnie, Maryland

SPORT uses as its final authority The American Heritage Dictionary, which we consider reasonably chaste. Indeed, "coronate" is not in it. We bowed to writer's license on that one. But in the interest of good grammar and proper syntax, we won't let it happen again. We'll just say that Griffey plays real good.

Argue with us, applaud us, advise us. Address your letters to **SPORT** Mail, 8490 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069.



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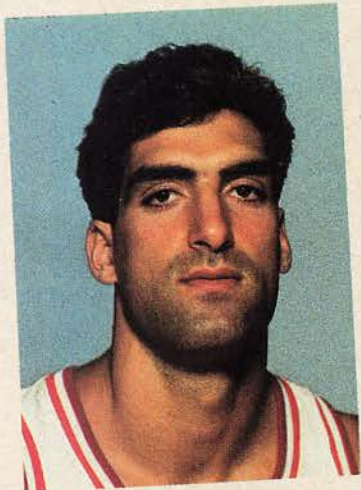


Americans At Their Best.

SPORT TALK

PROFILE

RONY SEIKALY



VITALS: Starting NBA center for the Miami Heat; won the Most Improved Player of the Year Award last year by averaging 16.6 points and 10.4 rebounds per game. Averaged only 55 percent from the foul line during the last two seasons. Helped Syracuse reach the Final Two in 1987 before losing to Indiana, 74-73. Born May 10, 1965, in Beirut, Lebanon; single.

BEST MEMORY: "Reaching the NCAA championship game against Indiana in 1987. No one expected us to make the tournament, because our team was loaded with freshmen and sophomores. Even though we didn't win the game, it turned out to be the best Syracuse team of all time."

WORST MEMORY: "My brush with death five years ago in Beirut. I usually took the stairs when I went to my third-floor apartment. But this day I was tired, and I took the elevator, which is quicker. The moment I reached the apartment, a bomb exploded in the staircase. It tore the building inside out. Imagine if I took the stairs. I would be in pieces. I still have chills thinking about it."

AFTER ANOTHER HUMILIATING LOSS I...: "Throw chairs and clothes all over the locker room."

THE CITY IN AMERICA THAT BEST DESCRIBES THE STRIFE-TORN BEIRUT: "Haram. When you walk by the buildings, you notice that windows are shattered and garbage is all over the streets. The rats have a good time, and the thing that bothers me the most is seeing vagrants lying in the street."

I WISH BEIRUT WOULD...: "Go back to being the Paris of the Middle East like it was 15 years ago. Beirut was once the most fashionable and happening place to have a good time. People actually used to vacation there to snow and water ski. That's why they used to call it 'the Heaven of the Middle East.'"

THE NBA TEAM WITH THE MOST AGGRESSIVE OFFENSE IS...: "Hard work and dedication. I'm not saying that I didn't work hard during my rookie year. You have to understand that during my rookie year, [the Miami Heat] had players who were rookies or bench players all their lives. That didn't help my cause in any way. If I had gone to the Lakers or any championship team, I would have been brought up slowly. Instead, I was exposed too early."

COLLEGE BASKETBALL FAILED TO TEACH ME...: "How to play 82 games a year. It failed to teach me the mental and physical toughness of the NBA. Going up and down that court can be gruesome. It affects the legs."

THE BIGGEST WIMP IN THE NBA: "Let me look at my schedule to make sure I don't play against this person anytime soon.... OK, Bill Laimbeer. I wish he would stop holding me when he's under the basket. In addition, he's always making flagrant fouls."

THE CHANGES I WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE NBA: "Less games. We should just play each team twice and get on with the playoffs. The season average is 55 percent from the foul line. I just have to keep on shooting. The physical aspects of my foul shooting are fine."

IF THERE WERE A WOMAN I COULD TAKE ON MY DESERT ISLAND IT WOULD BE...: "Cindy Crawford. The model you see in the magazines. I love her beauty. I just hope and pray there's a personality with it."

I WOULD MOST LIKE TO MEET: "God. He's so powerful that I want him to find a way to stop poverty in America."

FAVORITE SOUND: "The ocean. I love the sound of waves when they make the big splash. Believe it or not, when I'm near the ocean, I don't think about basketball. Hanging out near the ocean helps me forget about my rookie year."

—William Ladson

HIGH-TECH BOOKMAKING

It's an hour before the Atlanta Hawks tip-off, and dozens of vans are driving the city's thoroughfares. But they aren't taking people to the game—they're making book. Loaded with cellular phones, digital beepers, lap-top computers and laser printers, the vans help local bookies handle \$30 million in one hour.

Major operations have vans and storefronts where clerks answer phones, give betting lines and take wagers. Clients use code names, their bets transmitted by fax or computer modem.

"Just like every other big business, bookmaking has gone high-tech," says Walley

Herring, a gambling expert for the IRS. Herring says Atlanta—where illegal gambling is



a \$2 billion annual business—is a microcosm of the sports bookmaking industry.

The IRS says illegal sports betting claims \$100 billion a year. While bookmaking is a minor crime in most states, the tax-evasion charges the IRS seeks result in millions in fines and 10-year prison sentences. Authorities have increased efforts to crack down; Atlanta is the most recent target.

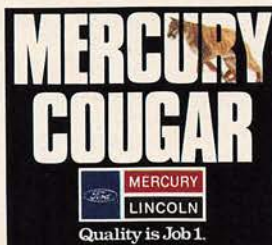
"We're not going after the little operations," says Herring. "We're after operations bringing in \$500,000 in bets every weekend."

—Mark Curriden

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FIVE HALL OF FAMERS WHO LOST AS MANAGERS



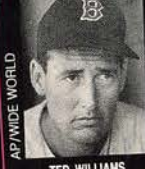
LOU BOUDREAU

Despite leading the Cleveland Indians to the world championship in 1948, Boudreau recorded a 1162-1224 mark in 16 years of managing between 1942 and 1960.



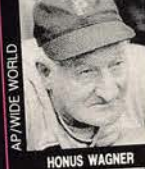
MEL OTT

Ott went into the Hall of Fame in 1951 with 511 home runs, but he could only muster a 494-530 record while managing the New York Giants from 1942 to 1948.



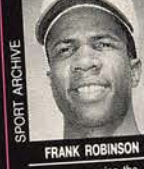
TED WILLIAMS

Williams made it to Cooperstown in 1966, but he managed only a .429 winning percentage as manager of the Washington Senators and Texas Rangers from 1969 to 1972.



HONUS WAGNER

Enshrined in Cooperstown in 1936, Wagner lost four out of five games during his only managerial stint in 1917.



FRANK ROBINSON

Now managing the Baltimore Orioles, Robinson currently owns a .478 winning percentage following stints with the Cleveland Indians (1975-79) and San Francisco Giants (1981-84).

TALE OF THE TAPE

ESTHER CANSECO VS. JOSE CANSECO

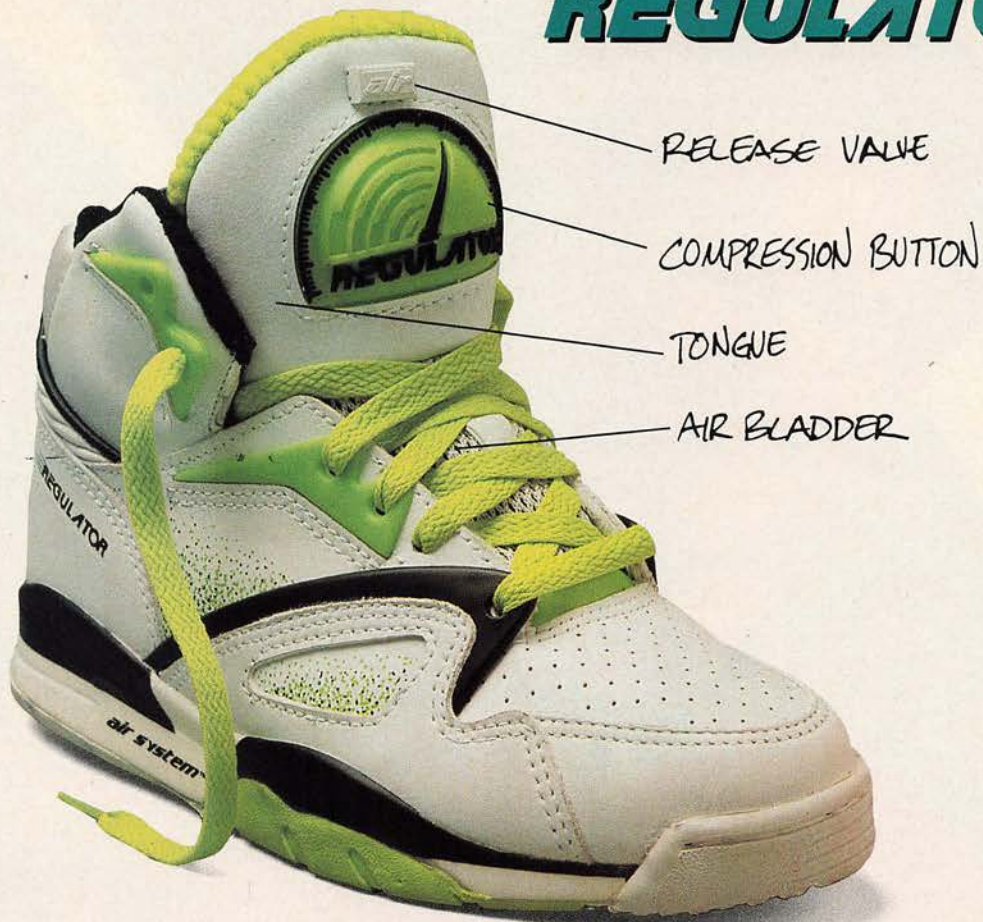
There's been no joy in Mudville ever since Esther Canseco called Oakland A's manager Tony La Russa "a punk" for not playing her husband, Jose, in Game 4 of the World Series. The A's were swept from the Series by the Reds in that game, and the rest is inglorious history. Jose filed for divorce before the present season, citing "irreconcilable differences." Yeah, like getting her hubby in trouble with the boss. Ten rounds in the Oakland Coliseum would be a sellout, and we'll even give Esther the bat to even the odds.



ESTHER	AGE	JOSE
24		27
JUST RIGHT	HEIGHT	6-3
JUST RIGHT	WEIGHT	230
BORED/BORING HOUSEWIFE	DAY JOB	OAKLAND A'S STAR SLUGGER
SHOOTING HER MOUTH OFF	HOBBY	LEGAL PROBLEMS
LANDING JOSE	AT THEIR BEST	1988's 42 HOMERS & 40 STEALS
LOSING JOSE	AT THEIR WORST	SITTING ON THE BENCH
"BUT JOSE..."	QUOTES WE EXPECT	"LATER BABE..."
LOTS OF ALIMONY	FUTURE PROSPECTS	PLAYING THE FIELD MORE
IVANA TRUMP	ROLE MODEL	SAM MALONE
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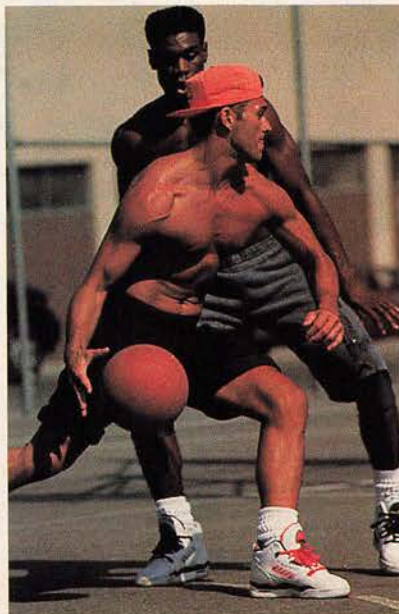


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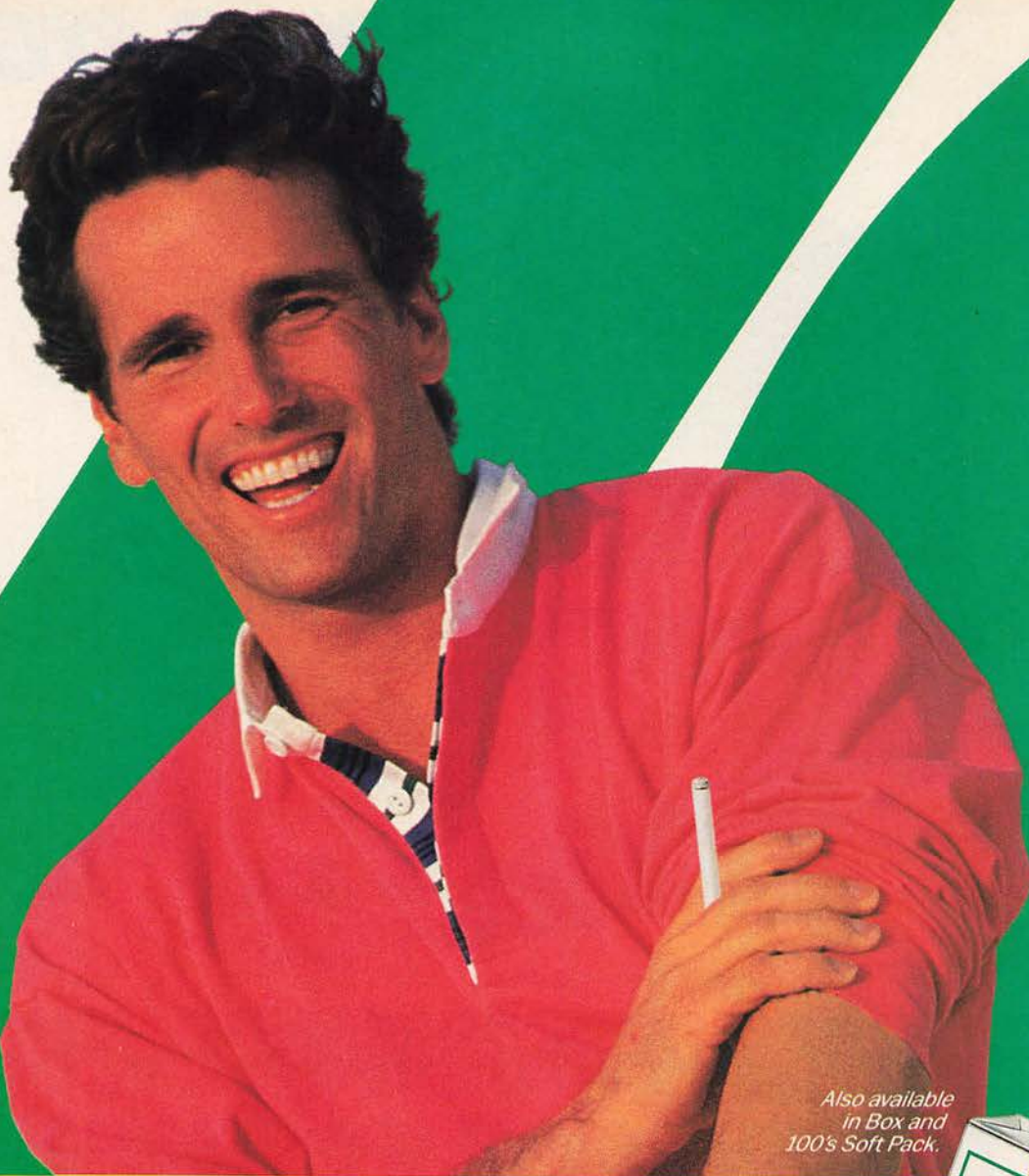
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Hey, James Worthy, how about joining me for a beer and a chat? No way. The trainer's alcove and the vacant locker room are staples of Worthy's existence these days. A sprained right foot has kept him out of the Lakers' lineup for several games and has shortened his practice sessions during Los Angeles' mid-season 16-game winning streak.

So while his teammates continue through their morning shoot-around, Worthy beats an early retreat to solitary foot wraps.

This has been a strange period for Worthy, emblematic, in certain ways, of his entire career. He has thrived in first-year coach Mike Dunleavy's system to such an extent that he's likely to lead the Lakers in scoring for the first time in his nine-year career. But the Lakers, after a slow start, win with or without Worthy. They hardly seem to miss him when he's hurt.

This apparent contradiction raises a question about Worthy, or rather restates one: Has there ever been as great a player who has so often been a member of the chorus while others are taking solo bows out front?

Worthy scored 28 points in North Carolina's 1982 NCAA championship victory—and was named the Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four—yet who remembers that game much beyond Michael Jordan's breathtaking game-winning jump shot? Worthy was an integral part of the Lakers' dominance of the NBA in the 1980s, but he received a thimbleful of the acclaim accorded Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

I mention this to Worthy as he settles

into the chair, and it soon becomes clear that I am not exactly inventing the wheel. It's a condition he has pondered and come to terms with.

"I think I understand that those types of people are rare," Worthy says after I have ticked off the names of his great

teammates, past and present. "They don't come around that often. But sometimes I don't think it's the attention they get; it's the publicizing. Julius Erving, Kareem, Larry Bird, Magic and then Michael took it through the roof. Now, obviously, you've got to be a great ballplayer. But other than that, I don't know what they're looking for. I'm just very quiet, very mellow, and maybe that's not what they're looking for.

"But it's never been important to me. There's never been a part of me that said, 'The only thing that's missing is this or that.' Nothing is missing as far as I'm concerned. And, really, it's been great for me personally. The

one thing I learned early on is that I truly love the game, and for me to have been surrounded by the kind of people you've mentioned, well, I think it's benefited my career to be around so many great players. It really gives you an insight into what professional sports should be."

Which is, of course, winning.

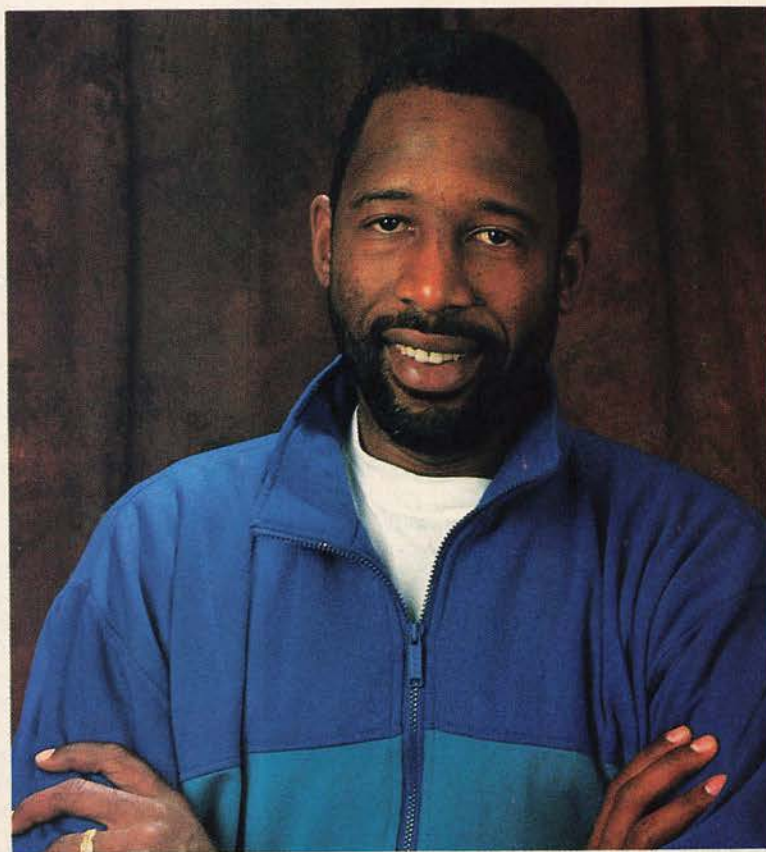
"I've achieved recognition by winning championships," Worthy says. "Maybe not as much as some people, but I've accomplished what some people couldn't accomplish if they did this twice over again. It took Julius Erving 13 years to win a championship, and I've got three. I've got nothing [else] I really wish for."

I mention something else to Worthy that I have long been curious about, and that is the way he carries himself. Whether on or off the basketball court, Worthy always seems to project a self-possessed aura of what can only be called dignity. This trait

"I'M STILL ACTIVE, AND WE CAN WIN SOME MORE CHAMPIONSHIPS."

By Ron Rapoport

ONE ON ONE WITH... JAMES WORTHY



ONE ON ONE

was put to a supreme test early this season following a well-publicized arrest on solicitation charges in Houston. But even then, Worthy's demeanor did not slip. He made no pleas for sympathy. He showed no public signs of anger or self-pity. And he continued to play excellent basketball.

Is this ability to keep such a tight rein on distracting emotions something innate? Or is it a learned response? Once again, I find I am treading on subject matter Worthy has often considered on his own.

"It just kind of jumped out at me at a certain point," he says. "My freshman year at North Carolina, I broke both bones in my ankle, tore up the ligaments and had metal implanted in it. So I wasn't sure I would be able to come back with the same type of intensity I'd always had. I wasn't traveling with the team, I wasn't going to all the practices, and I wasn't a part of the day-to-day routine. It really made me wake up and expose myself to all kinds of people... not confine myself to just basketball.

"So I became just a regular student. My friends became pre-law students and business majors, and that was a rude awakening for me. I realized that a lot of athletes are put on a pedestal at an early age. They're portrayed as something they really aren't, and they have to struggle with the image that's projected for them and never deal with

the inner self. So I learned to try to look at things as realistically as possible, at sports as the type of business it is, at the way people perceive you.

"I don't try to necessarily remove myself, but you have to be able to realize that it's primarily an occupation and that there are other things to be addressed in life. It's easy to be fooled in this business. It's easy to mistake your

"I'm just very quiet, very mellow, and maybe that's not what they're looking for."

notoriety for something that's real. But it's a business that's not always real. So being hurt that year was really a blessing in disguise because it made me look at things in a different way."

Worthy admits he may have had an advantage in developing this individualistic approach that has served him so well. As a brilliant athlete, and a physically imposing one, he could bring his own intelligence to bear without fear of temptation or ostracism.

"As a kid, peer pressure was never a problem," he says. "I always knew what I wanted to do. I think growing up tall had something to do with not being pushed. Nobody ever pushed me to the limit."

Then, when he began following sports closely, Worthy found there were important lessons that had little to do with the actual playing of the games.

"Growing up in North Carolina, I admired Julius Erving in his ABA days," Worthy says. "In the beginning, when you're young and not aware of everything, you just look at the playing. But when you get older, you really hone in on how you carry yourself. Kareem is another one who did that so well."

Though Worthy has been a part of three championship teams, he has no trouble picking out the one that means the most to him—the Lakers' victory over the Celtics in 1985.

"It's not just because it was my first NBA championship, but that we did it in the Garden," he says. "That was the one I cherish the most. There was a lot of attention

to the fact they'd pretty much dominated us, even though that was back in the '60s. Plus, we had lost to them the year before, so we had a lot of incentive."

Beyond that, Worthy says, he doesn't particularly dwell on the Lakers' multiple championships or their place in sporting history.

"I guess that's because I'm still active and we can win some more championships," he says. "But when I leave the game, I guess you can look back and say we dominated the '80s and that we won back-to-back championships, which hadn't been done in 18 or 19 years."

Worthy says he was not concerned by the Lakers' shaky start this season as Dunleavy installed a new system, nor was he surprised when they began to play so well after they adapted to it.

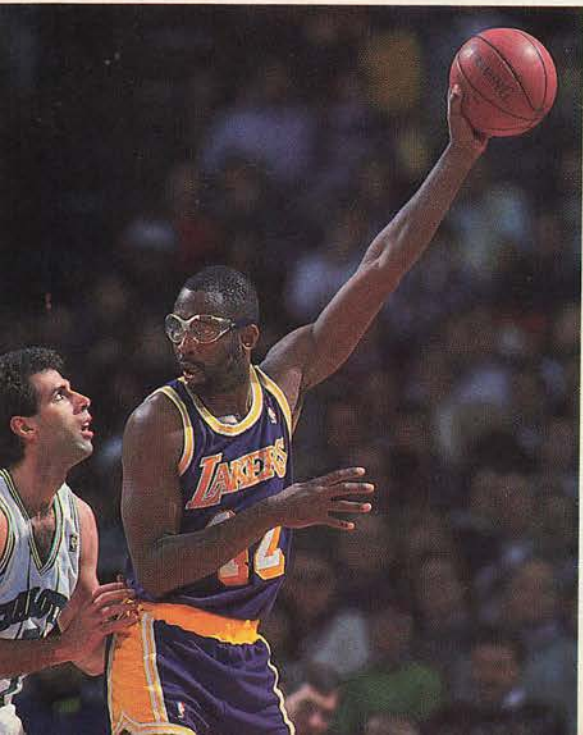
"I saw the potential of this ballclub," he says. "Had we been blown out or not made a major effort, then I would have been concerned. But they were close games, and we were there till the end. Plus, Mike never lost his cool. He just kept saying, 'We've got to keep it going, keep working on it, and it'll turn out all right.' And sure enough, it did. We were doing good with the system we were using [under Pat Riley], but I don't think there's any doubt that sometimes change is for the best.

"It's not only a new coaching style. We have a lot more plays and a lot more defensive concepts. Plus, we were bringing in some new faces and losing some old faces. So there was a lot to learn for everybody. The good thing about it is we weren't a bunch of rookies. We were veteran players who'd been around the league and had an idea of what would work."

The rest of the Lakers are coming in to the locker room now. This evening, they will win again while Worthy gives his foot another day of rest. Two nights later, he will return to the lineup, and they will win again. In a moment, I will reach over, shake Worthy's hand and thank him for his time. But first I circle back to the beginning. Don't you *want* the kind of attention that you deserve? The kind that goes to Magic and Michael and the rest?

"As long as I could be me, I wouldn't have any problems with it," he says. "It's just that it would be hard for me not to be James." ★

Ron Rapoport is a sports columnist for the *Los Angeles Daily News*.



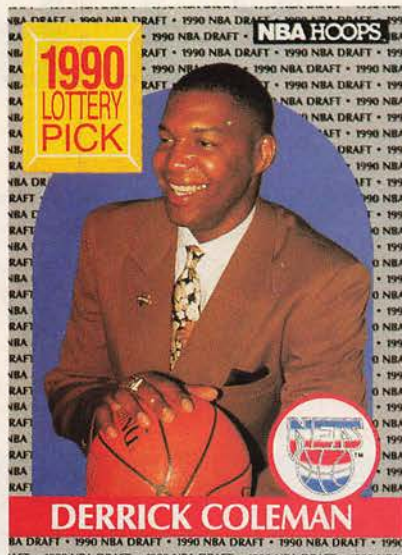
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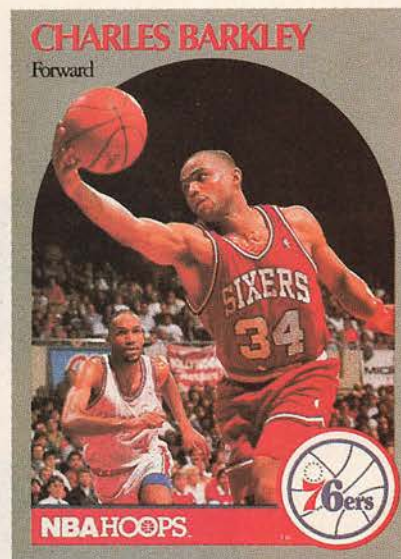
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in which two seasons?



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in the 1990 NBA draft?



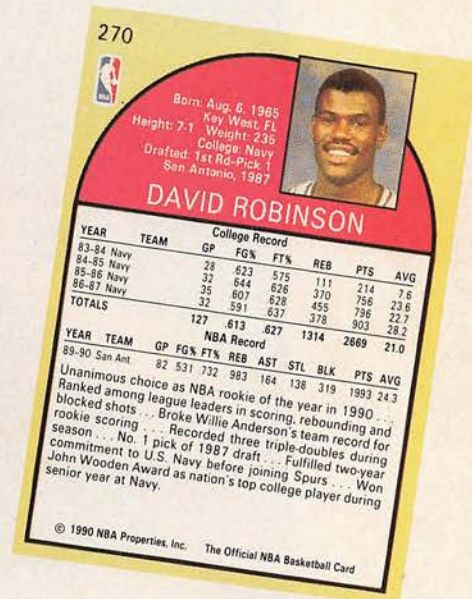
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Where did
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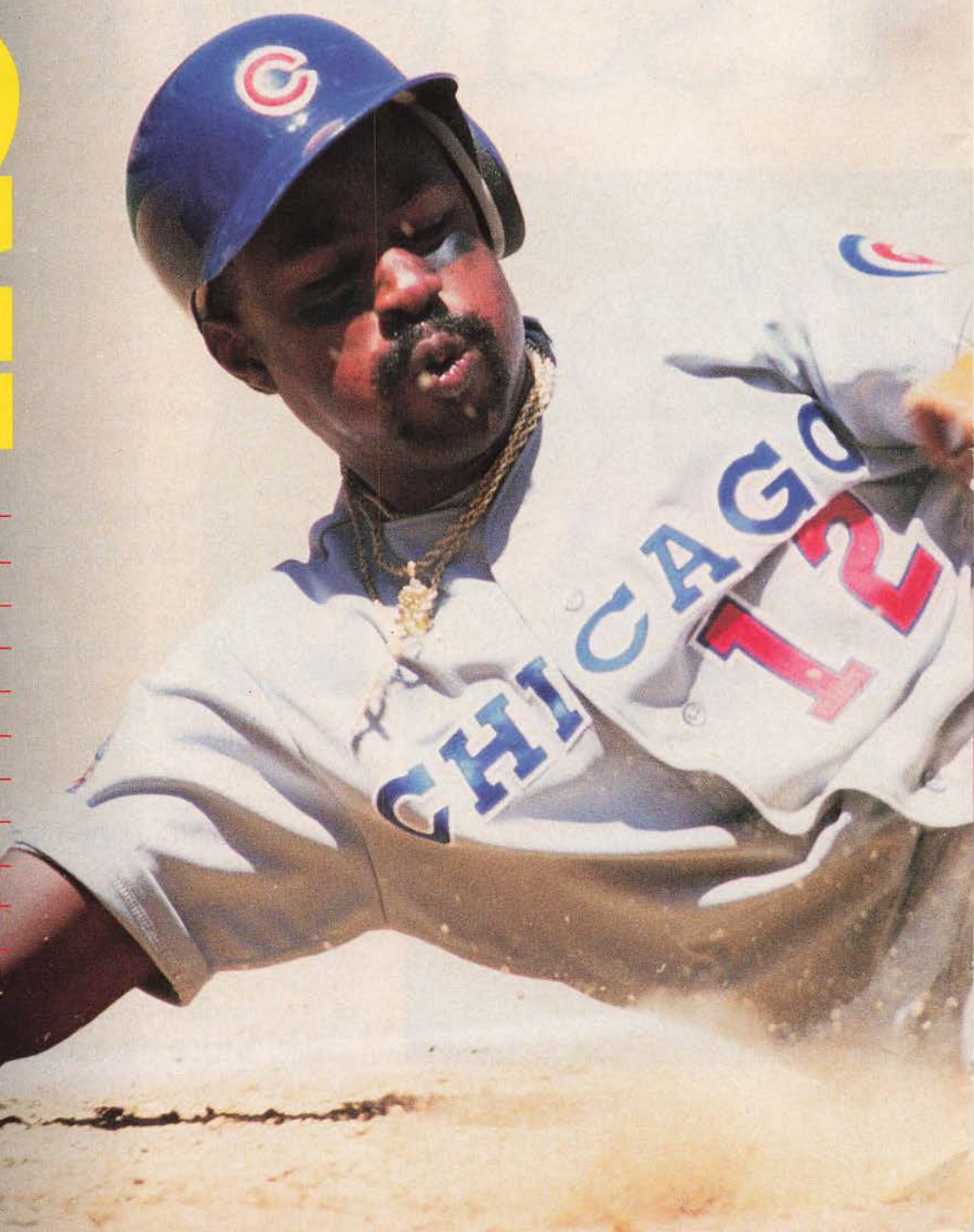
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ALL

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Key players, right? Players whose performances determine the fates of their teams, right?

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Every fan should know those guys as well. That's why SPORT has put together this key-player guide, taking you inside each team to identify the five players most critical to a club's success—or failure. What follows is your essential run-down of the key players on each club, a complement to the team analyses we presented in last month's SPORT. In addition to the five key players, we've pinpointed other key elements on each roster. The "keystone" player is the one guy on each team who can be depended on to turn in a topnotch season, come hell or high water. Each team also has a "key comeback" player, a guy who needs to rebound in 1991 from injury or a poor 1990. There are the key rookies and the key newcomers who will change the complexion of each team. And there's a player on each team who may have turned in a beyond-normal excellent 1990; we ask that he "do it again" in 1991.

The teams are listed in order of their predicted finish.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

1 WILLIE MCGEE The illusion is that McGee is an older, slower and less defensively handy version of the departed Brett Butler. The fact is that McGee is about two years younger than Butler, and though he may not steal quite as many, he'll do his share of running and hit like a batting champion and rebound from an off season in the field. At least the Giants hope so; if McGee doesn't provide the spark that Butler did, all that winter activity will have resulted in a net loss offensively.

2 DAVE RIGHETTI Sure, we've heard the whispers too. Rag's lost some of his zip, and his ERA hasn't seen the good side of three in four years. But get real here. Righetti should be the best thing to hit the San Francisco bullpen since Stu Miller. And if he just has a pretty good year (for him), the Giants will have closed the gap in the one area the Reds had all over them—a shutdown-style reliever. Righetti must know that approaching Rollie Fingers' career save mark of 341 would look good on his Hall of Fame application; with 224 at age 32, this is no time to slow down.

3 BUD BLACK Some men seek greatness. Others have it thrust upon them. Black signed a \$10 million contract for it. But for all the guff he's taken for his good financial fortune, Black has the arm and the savvy to give the Giants what they need: a solid, healthy starter who can contribute a good seven innings on a regular basis and win 15 games along with Scott Garrelts and John Burkett. What would *really* be nice, of course, would be a breakout 20-win season and a real ace on the staff. But that's too much to ask for \$10 million.

4 KEVIN MITCHELL Because Mitchell took the world by surprise when he went off for a .291-47-125 in 1989, not everybody was eager to anoint him as a serious long-term bomber.

The Giants are convinced of it, though, and they've built their offense around his big bat. Kevin moved up a notch in the eyes of the skeptics with a follow-up .290-35-93 last year, despite a bum wrist that required an off-season operation. His recovery is a key to the Giants' success. Let's put it this way—if Mitchell is an MVP candidate, the Giants are going to be there in October.

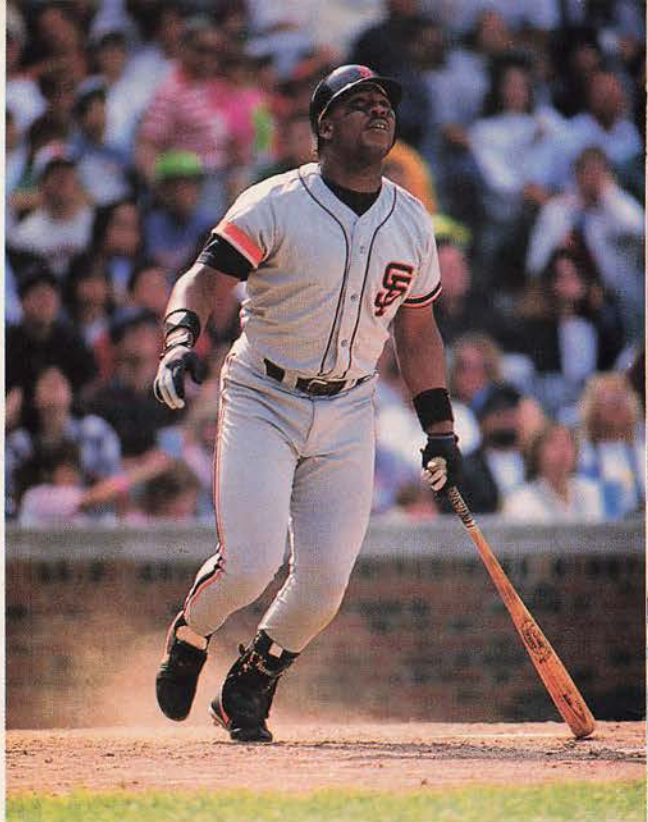
5 MATT WILLIAMS Matt Williams won the 1990 NL RBI title in his first full season in the majors. Forgive yourself if that surprises you. Not only does it seem like he's been around for a while (with three half-seasons previous to '90), but he also *looks* like he's been around for a while. And he plays like it too. If Williams has the kind of season he had last year, he'll make a healthy Kevin Mitchell that much more dangerous, and vice versa.

KEYSTONE: WILL CLARK His stats and performance are as smooth as his swing, his glove and his leadership. His homer output may have dropped steadily since 1987 with the advent of Mitchell, but if there's one thing you can count on in this world, it's that Will Clark will play great ball for the Giants.

KEY NEWCOMERS: You know how key Righetti, Black and McGee are by noting that they appear above.

KEY ROOKIE: STEVE DECKER This good-hitting backstop isn't just a kid to watch; he *is* the Giants' catcher this year.

KEY COMEBACK: Getting Kevin Bass to solidify right field would be nice, but what the Giants really need are full, healthy seasons from their battered pitching troika of



RON VESELY

Key to the Giants: Kevin Mitchell is now confirmed as a premier power threat.

Rick Reuschel, Kelly Downs and Don Robinson.

DO IT AGAIN: JEFF BRANTLEY He found himself in a closing role and popped for 19 saves and a 1.56 ERA. Something similar would complement Righetti just fine.

N.L. STOLEN BASES

LAST YEAR'S BEST

Montreal, .235. Five Expos had 21 or more steals, tops in the majors. Three Expos had 42 or more steals. No one could match that either. Speed burner Otis Nixon (50 in only 231 at-bats, a major-league record) led the way, followed by the since-departed Tim Lincecum (49) and rookie Delino DeShields (42), thus enabling the Expos to nip St. Louis by 14 steals.

1991 PREDICTION

New York. With Strawberry gone, the new-look Mets have a new philosophy: emphasize the running game. With six-time stolen base king Vince Coleman joining Howard Johnson (41 SBs in '89, 34 in '90) in the lineup, and with a manager (Bud Harrelson) who loves to utilize the speed game, the Mets will leave the rest of the league in the dust. Can't you see the back pages of the tabloids now: **METS WIN WITH BUD-DY BALL.**



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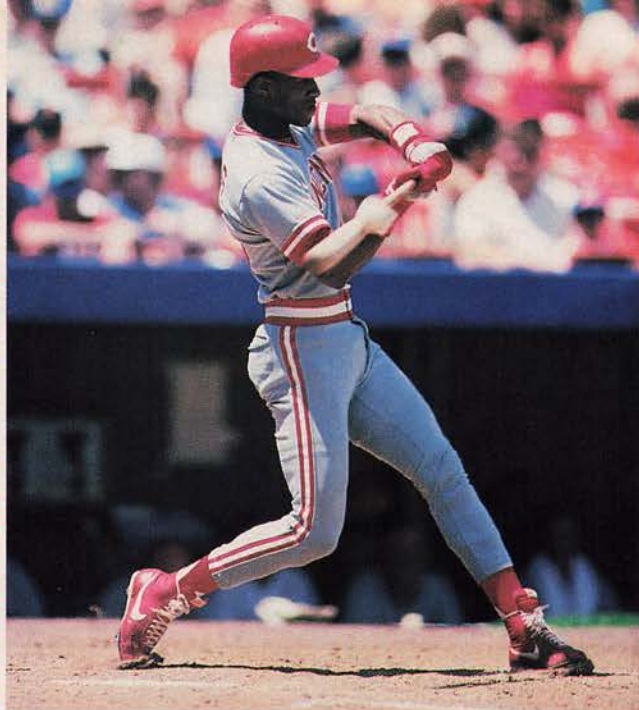
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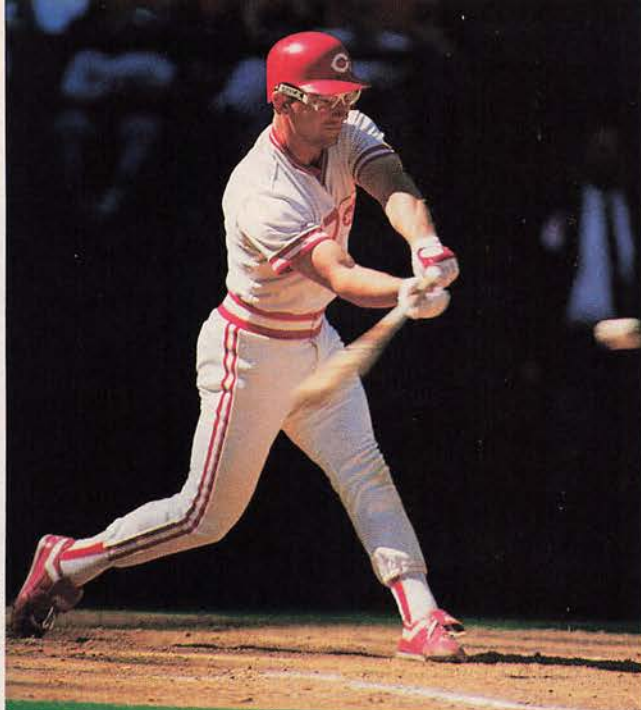


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BRYAN VABLONSKY



TOM DRACE

CINCINNATI REDS

1 ERIC DAVIS He served as an inspiration even during a relative off year for him, but the Reds can't afford that role for Davis again. The Giants and Dodgers have improved too much. The Reds weren't active in the winter, because they won it all with subpar years from a lot of their regulars. But if Davis doesn't play more, run more and hit more, the Reds won't repeat. Bad news for the Giants and Dodgers: He probably will.

2 JOSE RIJO The Reds have a lot of good pitchers, but nobody who has shown lately that he can do what Hershiser or Martinez can do for the Dodgers—win big, win often and stop losing streaks. Tom Browning has, but that was six years ago. Danny Jackson has, but he's gone. Rijo demonstrated in the Series how wonderful it could be for the Reds to have somebody like that. He's still young—he'll turn 26 on May 13—and this could be his year.

3 BILLY HATCHER You think it was coincidence that the Reds started playing perfect baseball when Hatcher started having a perfect batting average against Oakland (7 for 7 to start, then 9 for 12)? Why can't this Houston castoff do for the Reds what McGee and Butler are supposed to do for the Giants and Dodgers, respectively? Eric Davis shouldn't have to be the guy to

do that on top of everything else. Hatcher would do well to improve on his .327 on-base percentage.

4 ROB DIBBLE Since this guy says what he thinks and is damn articulate about it, people tend to assume that he's less happy than he really is with his lot in life. Dibble's no more of a malcontent than any other underpaid star; he's just more honest about it. Given the nature of the Reds' ownership, there's been a lot of soap-opera talk since their sweep of the A's. Given the nature of Dibble's right arm, he should overcome all of it and give the team exactly what it needs out of the bullpen.

5 RANDY MYERS What's Myers doing here if we already mentioned Dibble? Wouldn't just one of them be "key," since the other can always make up for any failure? Nope. That's not what made the Reds champs. Relievers can't get any better than Eckersley or Righetti or Thigpen—or Myers or Dibble. Unless, that is, you have two of them, a lefty and a righty. As long as the Reds have both of them, they only have to win seven-inning games.

KEYSTONE: BARRY LARKIN Shortstop, you'll agree, is the key position. Unless you're from Baltimore, you'll also agree that the Reds have the best all-around shortstop in baseball.

KEY NEWCOMER: BILLY DORAN Of course, he really arrived late last season. But Doran's in for the long haul this year, and he's shown hints of returning to his form of the mid-'80s, when he was the best second baseman in the NL whose initials weren't R.S.

KEY ROOKIE: CHRIS HAMMOND Everybody wanted to abduct the prize lefty (15-1,

TOP LEFT: Key to the Reds: Cincinnati survived an Eric Davis off year in 1990. They need all of him this time.

TOP RIGHT: Do it again: Chris Sabo led the Reds in home runs last season. Is that a trend?

2.17 at Nashville) over the winter; the Reds held on. He'll be a starter.

KEY COMEBACK: JACK ARMSTRONG Remember when he was the fair-haired boy with an 11-3 record, a 2.28 ERA and an All-Star Game starting berth? After the break, Armstrong went 1-6.

DO IT AGAIN: CHRIS SABO Is he really going to keep giving the Reds 25 homers and 71 RBIs? Who knows? Smart people do not make predictions about Chris Sabo.

N.L. FIELDING

LAST YEAR'S BEST

Cincinnati, .983. The air-tight left side of Cincinnati's infield—shortstop Barry Larkin and third baseman Chris Sabo—and the defensive excellence of the outfield enabled the Reds to edge the Giants by less than 1/10,000 of a point.

1991 PREDICTION

Cincinnati. With consistent veteran Bill Doran taking over at second base for the erratic Mariano Duncan, swift-fielding Hal Morris at first base over Todd Benzinger from the outset and the presence of Larkin and Sabo, the Reds are a lock. With Willie McGee in center and an excellent defensive infield, San Francisco will be right there too.

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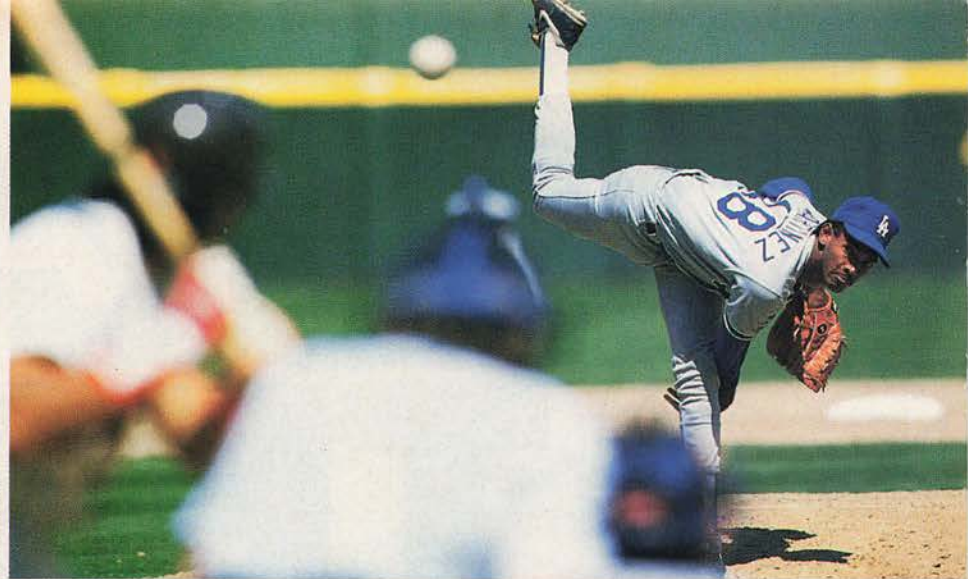
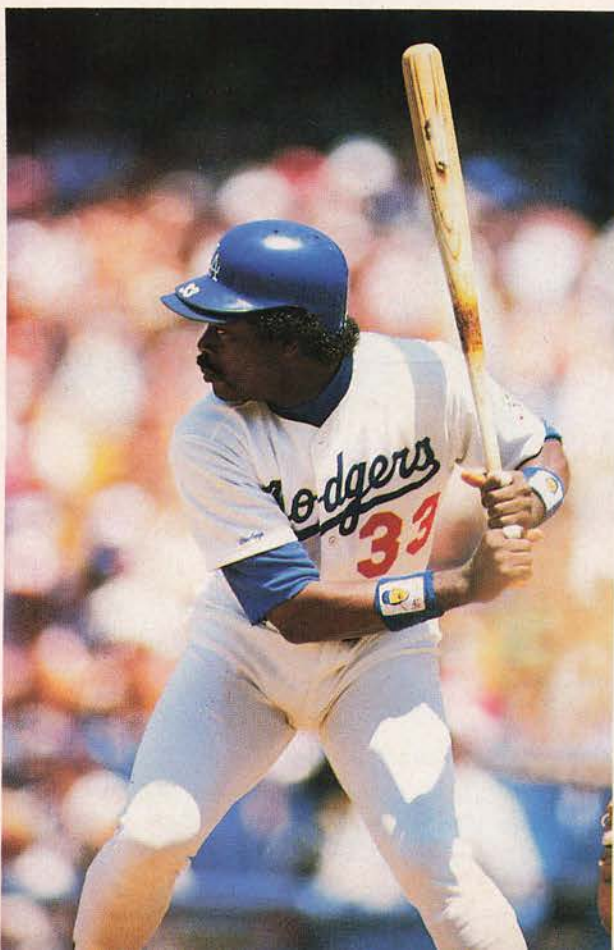
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LOS ANGELES DODGERS

1 DARRYL STRAWBERRY Dodgers catcher Mike Scioscia said it best: "We didn't acquire Strawberry to lead us to a pennant this year. We got him to be a big part of the club for years into the future." That doesn't mean the Dodgers aren't gunning for it all right now; it simply means that run production was not what kept L.A. behind the Reds last season. Fred Claire (more likely Peter O'Malley, in this case) went for Darryl not to fill a specific, crying need but more because one of the biggest stars in the game was there for the taking—and *wanted* to come. Still, Strawberry can't help but be the big key. Strawberry can either do for the Dodgers what Gibson did for them in 1988 or what Gibson did to them last year.

Key to the Dodgers: Eddie Murray—not Darryl Strawberry or Kal Daniels—is the main man of the L.A. offense.



2 JAY HOWELL When your bullpen is dwarfed by your fellow contenders, the main man out there is about as key as you can get. Barring a major trade or a minor miracle, the Dodgers are praying for Howell to return to at least his 1988-89 form. Even with that, he'll need help.

3 BRETT BUTLER The Dodgers don't make many mistakes, but when they do, they pay big time—and long time. The organization is still trying to find a left-handed reliever to replace Steve Howe, who disappeared six years and four comebacks ago. And after they ran hard-nosed Steve Sax out of town before the afterglow of their 1988 championship had worn off, they've spent two years without a leadoff hitter, without a base-stealing offensive spark plug (no, we haven't forgotten Juan Samuel) and, not coincidentally, without a division crown. Brett Butler is in town to change all that.

4 EDDIE MURRAY Veteran Dodgers fans remember when the club used to pick up fading power hitters to finish up their careers in Dodger blue. Bill Skowron. Frank Robinson. Boog Powell. Dick Allen (who, however, had his best year *after* his ill-fated stint with L.A.). Ken Boyer. Those fans may be forgiven if they inserted Murray into

Do it again: Can the Dodgers expect another 20-win season out of Ramon Martinez?

that class after his so-so first year with the Dodgers, when the career .295 hitter managed just .247. Last year was more like it though: He batted a title-threatening .330 with 26 homers, 95 RBIs and a discernible enthusiasm. Make no mistake about it, Murray is the core of the Dodgers offense.

5 LENNY HARRIS/MIKE SHARPERSON The Dodgers' resident Rosencrantz and Guildenstern act turned in first-rate work last year, manning second and third. They were rewarded with a plunge in the depth chart, but with the shaky Samuel the incumbent at second base and third base a tossup between a converted Stan Javier, a long-lost Jeff Hamilton and an unproven Dave Hansen, the Dodgers will be damn glad to have these two and their circa-.300 averages around.

KEYSTONE: MIKE SCIOSCIA Even if he couldn't hit, Scioscia would be the heart and soul of the Dodgers. And, lately, he's been hitting like he means it.

KEY NEWCOMER: BOBBY OJEDA Obviously, the most important newcomers are listed above. Of the rest, the ex-Met lefty could do for the staff what Fernando Valenzuela hasn't in recent years.

KEY ROOKIE: JOSE OFFERMAN The shortstop job should be his, and Tommy Lasorda doesn't want to have to worry about it all summer. Also watch Dave Hansen at third.

KEY COMEBACK: OREL HERSHISER Nobody's asking for his near-perfect '88 season again. Just being there will do.

DO IT AGAIN: RAMON MARTINEZ Was it just a year ago that Martinez (20-6, 2.92 ERA in '90) was battling John Wetteland for the fifth spot in the L.A. rotation?

ALLSPORT USA

KIRK SCHLEA

ATLANTA BRAVES

1 JOHN SMOLTZ The Giants and Reds, and maybe even the Padres, can think about contending with a deep but standouts staff. The Braves need a stopper. Smoltz, who's fashioned winning records in the last two years with a very bad team, is the best bet to do it.

2 TOM GLAVINE If Smoltz doesn't, Glavine must. Manager Bobby Cox is high on both of these guys, boasting that they're as good a one-two punch as there is in the division. Glavine won 14 games in '89, losing only eight, before dropping to 10-12 last year. He has a left arm that has to be respected.

3 SID BREAM Having bolted from a division-winning team, Bream's legend has grown out of proportion to his accomplishments. His power is less than you'd like from your first baseman, and he's not the most feared hitter in

the league. But Bream could thrive in Atlanta, and he brings something to the party that the Braves haven't known in a while—recent experience as a winner. A shot of that might work wonders.

4 RON GANT Add this guy to the 30-30 club (32 home runs, 33 stolen bases) and pencil him in to do it again, as well as improve on his .303 average. If he doesn't, ink the Braves down for another miserable year. The Braves are either going to have a major-league offense or they're not, and it starts with guys such as Gant.

5 JEFF BLAUSER The Braves' shortstop situation drags on. Blauser and Andres Thomas have taken turns disappointing everybody so often that Atlanta picked up Rafael Belliard and kept a straight face about it. The words "trade" and "shortstop" are synonyms in Atlanta. If Blauser could play up to his promise, life would be easier for Bobby Cox.

KEYSTONE: DAVE JUSTICE He's only played 143 games in the big leagues, but there's nobody in baseball who isn't convinced that Justice is going to get the job done for Atlanta for a lot of years to come. Who was the most productive cleanup hitter in the NL last year? Dave Justice.

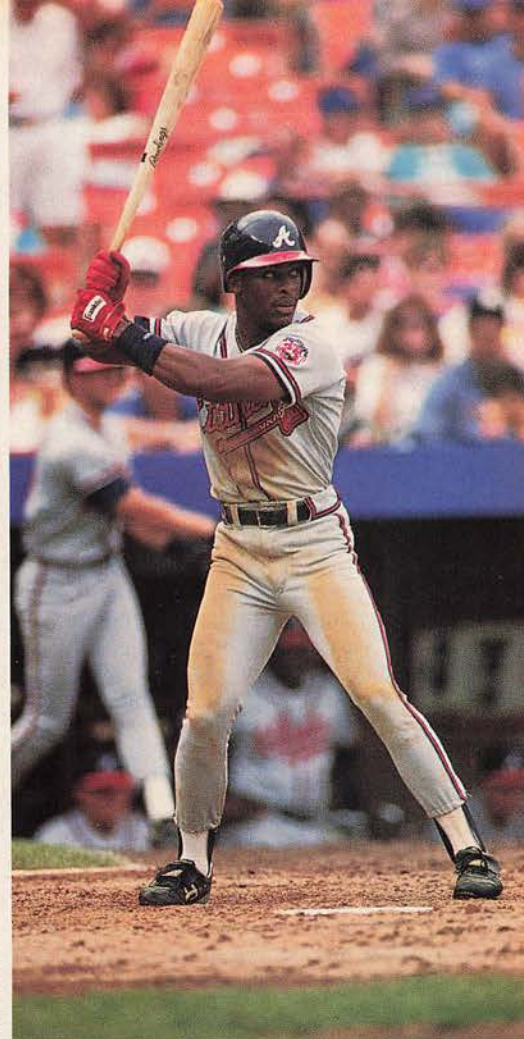
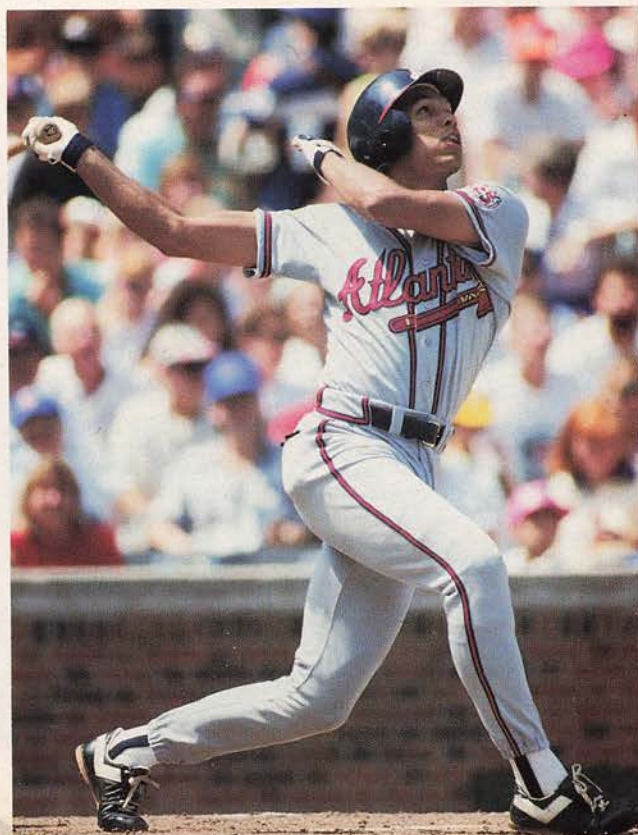
KEY NEWCOMER: TERRY PENDLETON He and Bream bring instant professionalism to the infield corners, and Cox is convinced their gloves will turn the starters into better pitchers.

KEY ROOKIE: MIKE STANTON He'll get a shot at the closer job along with Kent Mercker and maybe Juan Berenguer. Stanton looked like a lock after seven saves in 20 outings in '89, but he was hurt last year.

KEY COMEBACK: CHARLIE LEIBRANDT: The left-hander won 60 games for Kansas City from '85 to '88. A 9-11 record in '90 wasn't exactly what the Braves had in mind for their only seasoned starter.

DO IT AGAIN: GREG OLSON His all-star first half was so unconvincing that the Braves picked up Mike Heath as a free agent and encouraged rookies Jimmy Kremers and Kelly Mann to think seriously about making the team.

The Braves' Keystone: After just one season in Atlanta, sweet-swinging Dave Justice is the Braves' best player.



Key to the Braves: Ron Gant is a 30-30 man and a key cog in Atlanta's rebuilt offense.

N.L. EARNED RUN AVERAGE

LAST YEAR'S BEST

Montreal, 3.37. After losing three-fifths of their starting rotation to free agency (Mark Langston, Pascual Perez and Bryn Smith), the Expos pulled off one of the season's major upsets by winning the ERA crown. Six pitchers, with at least 40 innings under their belt, had ERAs under 3.00, including the top three starters: Dennis Martinez (2.95), Oil Can Boyd (2.93) and rookie Chris Nabholz (2.83).

1991 PREDICTION

New York. Who else has four potential Cy Young Award winners in the starting rotation (Doc Gooden, Frank Viola, David Cone, Sid Fernandez) and another in the bullpen (John Franco)? No one. Shoot, the Mets' fifth starter, Ron Darling, could be a No. 2 man on more than half the clubs in the majors. Look for the Pirates (with the comeback of John Smiley) and the Expos to be breathing down the Mets' neck.

J. DANIEL/ALLSPORT USA

SCOTT JORDAN LEVY

SAN DIEGO PADRES

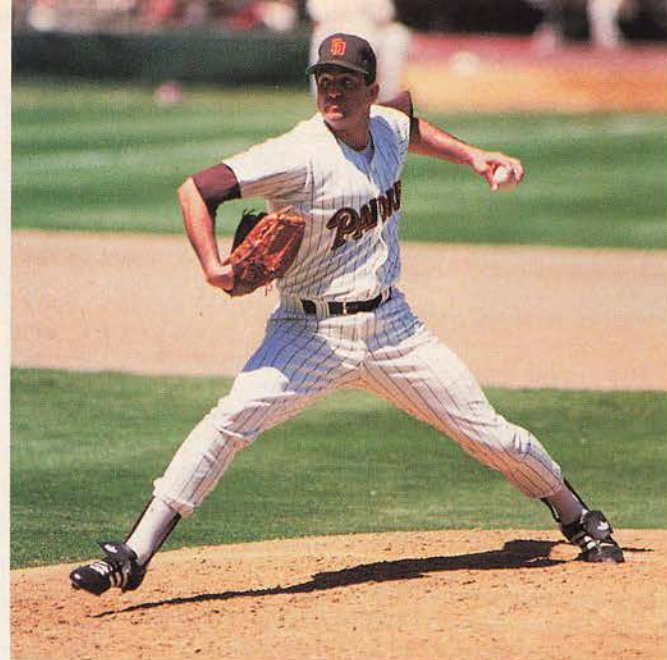
1 TONY FERNANDEZ The Padres cashed in an all-star second baseman with some discipline problems and a whole career ahead of him (Roberto Alomar) for an all-star shortstop with leadership ability and several good years left. Fernandez will surely give the Padres the solid defense at short that Garry Templeton hasn't been able to provide in years. But is San Diego getting the .322-hitting Fernandez of 1987 or the .276 of last year? If Fernandez can offer some stability and coolness under pressure, the .276 version and his glove will do.

2 BRUCE HURST Since 1983, Hurst has started more than 30 games every year except one, the Red Sox's pennant-winning year of 1986. In fact, in the last four years, he's pitched in *exactly* 33 games every season. That's how consistent the junk-balling left-hander can be. But Bruce Hurst should be the ace of this Padres staff—not Ed Whitson, not Dennis Rasmussen, not even Andy Benes.

3 CRAIG LEFFERTS His name gets lost in the shuffle, but Lefferts will save you ballgames if you give him half a chance. With seven wins and 23 saves, he sure as hell had a better year for the Padres than the man he replaced—Mark Davis—had for his new team. Question: Will the Padres starters and hitters give him half a chance?

4 BENITO SANTIAGO He's a joy to watch behind the plate, and his arm should be registered. Each year, however, there seems to be something just a little off about his game, be it his health (he played in only 100 last season), his control of the proceedings or his bat. Santiago's stolen base total has dropped steadily since his high of 21 in 1987, and that's understandable. But so has his batting average; he hasn't come close to the .300 he hit in that great rookie year. A productive and mature Santiago is one of the key ingredients in revising last year's nightmare in San Diego.

5 FRED McGRUFF Fans will argue well past the end of the upcoming season about who made out in the four-all-star trade between Toronto and San Diego last winter. Cynics, in fact, might suggest that was precisely the



Key to the Padres: Bruce Hurst should be the ace of the San Diego staff.

reason the trade was made; never have these two towns been talked about more. But we can say this much: Fred McGriff is a force. Last season, he reached the .300 plateau while delivering his usual 35 home runs. McGriff will more than make up for the loss of Jack Clark. Problem is, he has to make up for the loss of Clark and Joe Carter.

KEYSTONE: TONY GWYNN Gwynn has heard it all during his brilliant career—not enough power, "soft" batting championships and, lately, even clubhouse stuff-stirring accusations. But he just keeps hitting and fielding and running, though his stats did show the strain of last season's soap opera. Let's get something straight now: With four home runs, Gwynn had only 16

fewer RBIs (88 to 72) than Fred McGriff had with his 35 homers for Toronto last season.

KEY NEWCOMER: LARRY ANDERSEN The last we saw of Andersen, he was getting lit up along with the rest of the Red Sox bullpen in the ALCS. The Padres are hoping that the 38-year-old has something left as a set-up man or middle reliever.

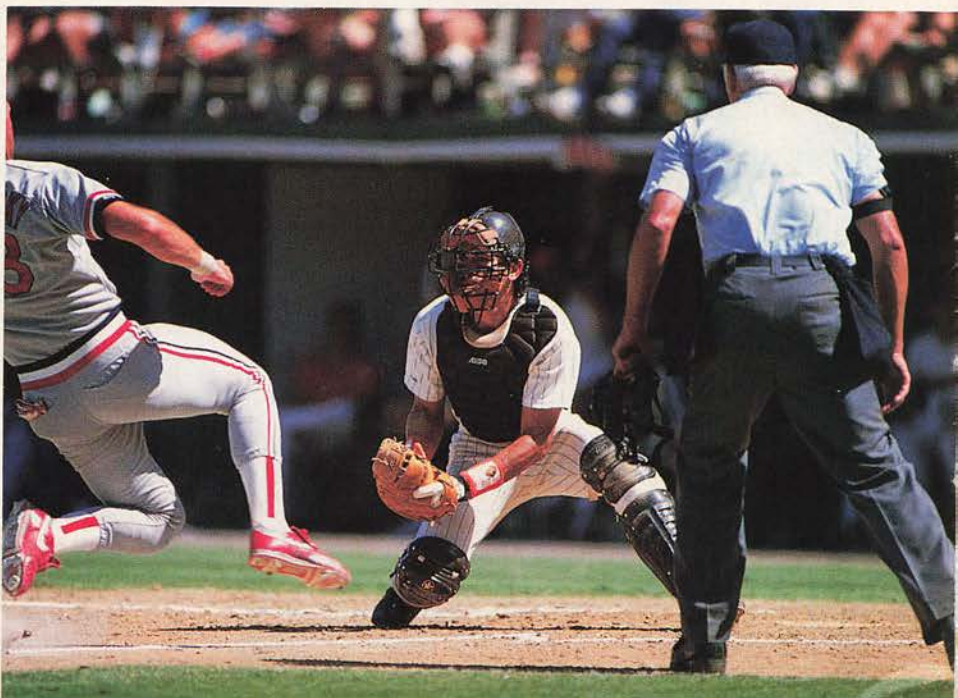
KEY ROOKIE: THOMAS HOWARD Some-

body has to fill the outfield holes, and here's a switch hitter who can run. The Padres' best prospect, though, is speedballer Rafael Valdez, who might be a year away.

KEY COMEBACK: DENNIS RASMUSSEN After much bickering, the Padres went ahead and signed the big lefty. In return, they'd like something resembling the 14-4 mark he had after coming over from the Reds in 1988.

DO IT AGAIN: BIP ROBERTS Last year, he turned into the kind of utility guy who played 149 games, collecting 172 hits, batting .309 and stealing 46 bases. Now that he'll inherit one of the vacated infield spots, they should change his nickname to Bronco and accept the fact that he can be a potent offensive force.

Key to the Padres: Benito Santiago still hasn't matched his awesome rookie season of 1987.





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HOUSTON ASTROS

1 ERIC YELDING It's a little unclear just how the Astros expect to improve upon their major-league-worst 573 runs scored of last season, but one thing that is clear is that Yelding is going to have to steal a lot of them. He swiped 64 bases last season despite a miserable on-base percentage (.305) and a subpar success ratio (they threw him out 25 times). Now that he's nabbed the shortstop job on a full-time basis, he'll have to improve his effectiveness to catalyze a team with no power. And he'll have to catch the ball on a regular basis and throw it straight most of the time, two things his predecessor, Rafael Ramirez, didn't do.

2 MARK PORTUGAL With Mike Scott and Jim Deshaies coming off frightening subpar years and everybody else gone, Portugal may have to become the ace of the staff. He showed he might be able to do it after coming over from Minnesota in 1988 and winning seven games in 15 starts, finishing 7-1 with a 2.75 ERA in 1989. And he gutted it out admirably last year, especially in the second half, starting 32 games overall and winning 11 of them without much support.

3 LUIS GONZALEZ Well, the Astros are telling the world that their youth movement is for real, so why not hand the first-base job to a rookie with some sock? Gonzalez hit 24 homers and drove in 89 runs for Double-A Columbus last season. Scouts love his bat, and he stole 27 to boot. With Glenn Davis and Franklin Stubbs in the American League now, Gonzalez looks like a better bet than another rookie, Mike Simms, to fill the first-base gap. He can also play third or the outfield.

4 PETE HARNISCH Just a few months ago, Harnisch was a promising young right-hander who was progressing nicely for the Orioles. Now he's the very symbol of a lopsided trade, having come over along with Steve Finley and Curt Schilling for the

beloved Glenn Davis. A good year out of Harnisch—and he very well could have one in the Astrodome—would not only help restore a gutted staff, but it would rid Houston of the bitter taste of the Davis deal.

5 ERIC ANTHONY For two years, we've been hearing about all the good things that Anthony can do for the Astros' offense, and each time, he's ended up doing them for Tucson. This year, the Astros need some power out of Anthony all year in Houston. He'll probably get the right-field job and another chance to come through.

KEYSTONE: CRAIG BIGGIO He's the only returning regular with anything close to a guarantee of his old position back. At 25, he's the team leader.

KEY NEWCOMER: STEVE FINLEY Most of the team is new or near new, but Finley is the one offensive player who came over for Glenn Davis. The pressure will be on him to deliver, but he's not even a lock for a starting job.

KEY ROOKIE: JEFF BAGWELL The beauty of a rebuilding team is the open competition at every position. Bagwell hit .308 in '89 in the Red Sox organization before coming over for Larry Andersen, and the Astros are high enough on him to give him a shot at

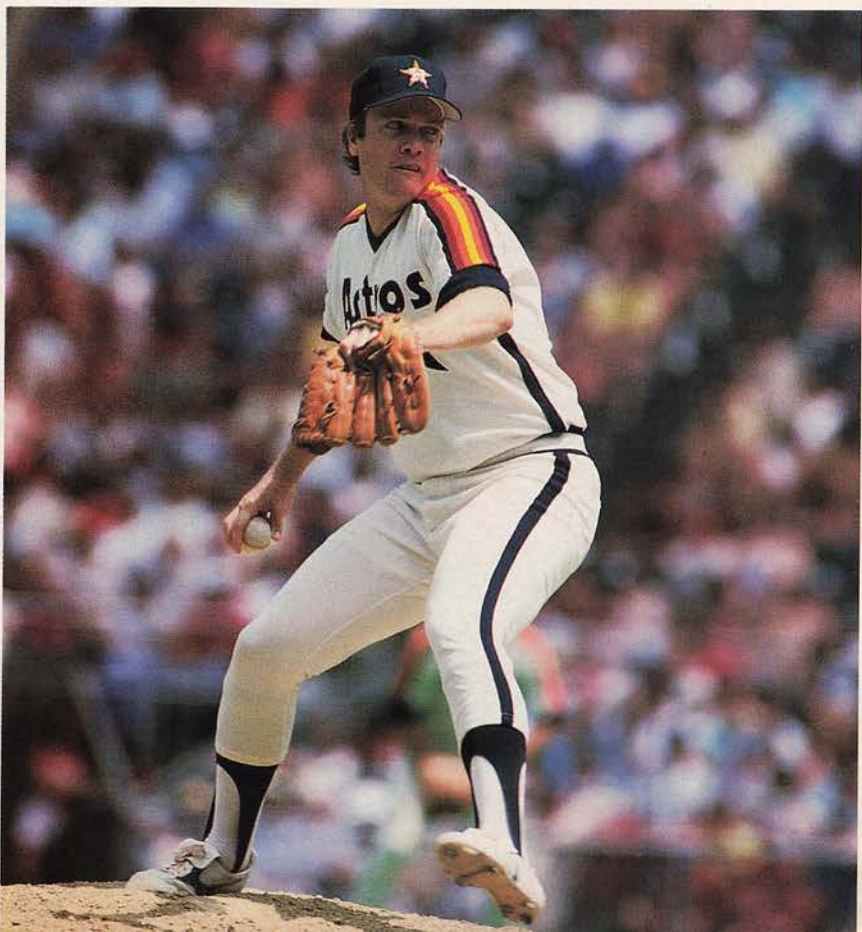
The Astros' Keystone: Craig Biggio is Houston's only returning regular with credibility.

MICHAEL PONZINI

unseating Ken Caminiti at third.

KEY COMEBACKS: MIKE SCOTT & JIM DESHAIES When your two best pitchers combine for a 16-25 year, "key" is a mild word for their comeback. Scott is coming off arm surgery, and all bets are off.

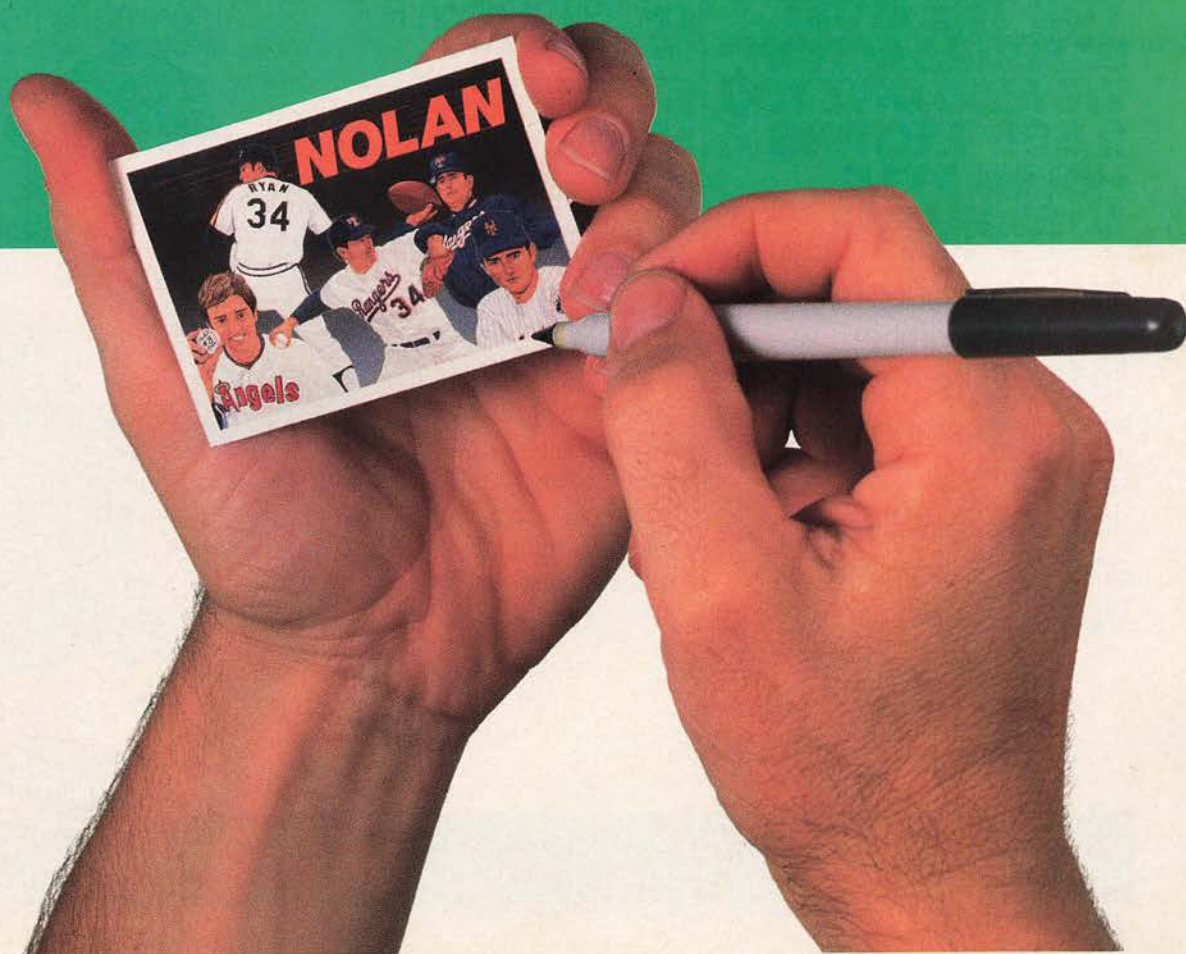
DO IT AGAIN: ART HOWE Amid all the adversity, the Astros manager has remained A) upbeat and polite, B) committed to winning and C) employed.



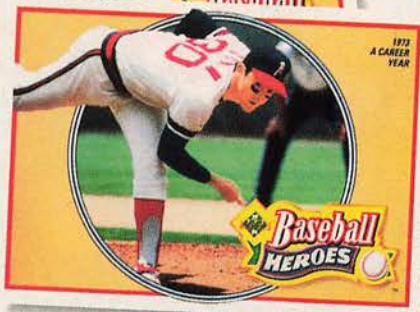
BRYAN YABLONSKY

Key Comeback: Mike Scott's arm surgery kept him from being traded and will mean a chance to regain his form in Houston.

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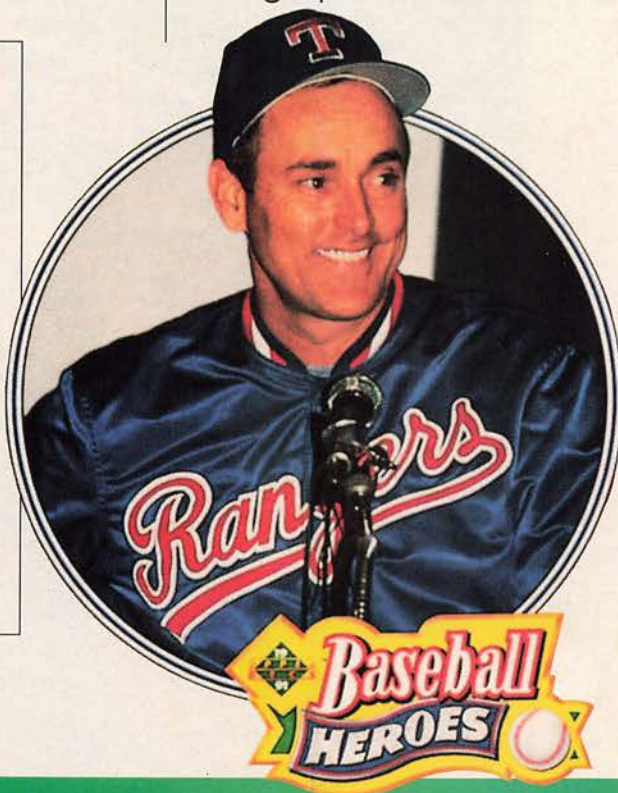
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PITTSBURGH PIRATES

1 DOUG DRABEK He was a two-pitch, sub-.500 pitcher who had trouble getting into the fifth inning. Then he became a Pirate, and that meant working with Ray Miller, one of baseball's best pitching coaches. Drabek was 1-8 with a 4.79 ERA in July of 1987 when Miller altered the pitcher's repertoire, adding a sharper-breaking curve, a sinking fastball and a change-up. Since then, Drabek is 61-29, including a league-leading 22-6 last year. "He was virtually unhittable nearly every time out," says Roger Craig, the Giants' manager. Pirates manager Jim Leyland says his club wouldn't have won the East last year without late-season pickup Zane Smith. Without Drabek (14-2 after July 8), they wouldn't have been a contender.

2 BOBBY BONILLA Moving from the demanding position of third base to right field did wonders for Bonilla. Not that he didn't do well before the move. Heck, he hit 48 homers and drove in 186 runs the previous two seasons combined. But last year, he cranked it up a notch. He knocked in 120 runs, scored 112, hit 32 homers—and 39 doubles—and batted .280. "He's one of the scariest hitters in our league," says Montreal manager Buck Rodgers. "He's a devastating force." From either side of the plate, no less. He hit 18 homers from the left side, 14 from the right. "People say, 'Barry Bonds this, Barry Bonds that,' but it's Bonilla who's [the Pirates'] key offensive player," says one NL hitting coach.

3 BILL LANDRUM Bullpens by committee can be extremely effective, as Whitey Herzog and Leyland have illustrated—brilliantly, we might add. But Leyland would prefer to have Landrum step forward and do what he did in '89, which was save 26 games and post a 1.67 ERA. "He can be dominant," says Leyland. Only when he's healthy though. Last year, when an assortment of injuries limited his effectiveness, he had 13 saves and a 2.13 ERA, thus forcing Leyland to use a committee. Winning a division with a bullpen committee takes a little luck. Odds of it happening two straight times are slim. That's why it's so imperative for Landrum to come through with about 30 saves.

4 BARRY BONDS

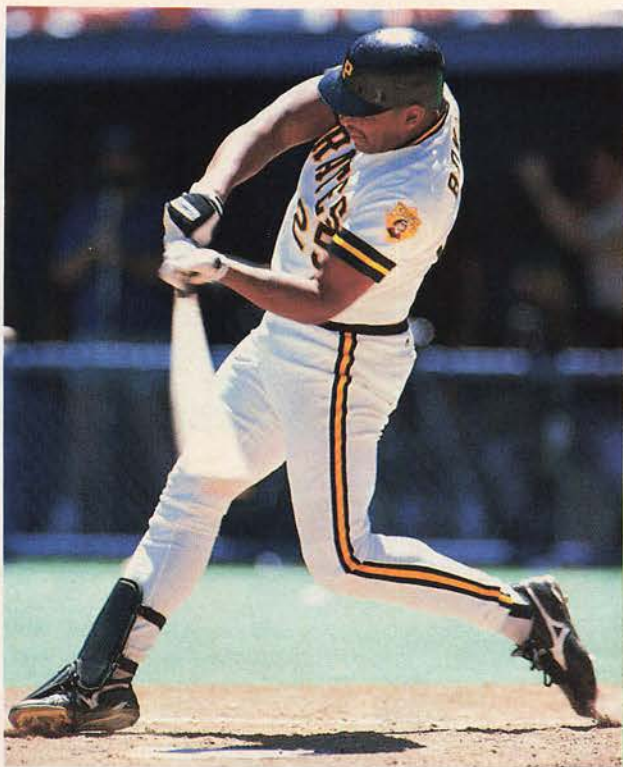
Only one guy in history has driven in more than 100 runs, hit more than 30 homers, stolen more than 50 bases and hit better than .300 in a season. That guy is Bonds, who had 114 RBIs, 33 homers, 52 steals and a .301 average. For good measure, he also scored 104 runs, hit .377 with runners in scoring position, threw out 14 base runners and won the NL MVP. "He just might be the best player in the game," says one scout. Maybe. He does everything Rickey Henderson can do—and has more power. He isn't as fast but has excellent speed. He has almost as much power as Darryl Strawberry—and hits for a higher average. The downside? Bonds has a chip on his shoulder the size of Three Rivers Stadium. He's bitter that his father is not in the Hall of Fame, and he's not particularly happy about being compared to his dad. If he doesn't let go of his anger, his production may decline.

5 JOHN SMILEY This guy happens to be one of the top four or five left-handers in the game today. Only nobody realizes it. Everyone will this year. With Pittsburgh losing nearly half of its free agents—including Sid Bream and R.J. Reynolds—it's imperative that Smiley help compensate with a performance reminiscent of '89, when he posted a 2.81 ERA and 12 wins. And he will, thus giving the Pirates the NL's best rotation and the edge over the revitalized Cubs. How important is Smiley? Before he was sidelined with a fractured left hand last year, the Pirates staff was 23-12 with a 2.80 ERA. Without him, the staff was 20-18, 4.23. "To win the division again," says Leyland, "we need Smiley."

KEYSTONE: ANDY VAN SLYKE You can't get more dependable than Van Slyke, a brilliant defensive center fielder who provides leadership. He'll cross the finish line at .300, 20 HRs, 90 RBIs.

KEY NEWCOMER: CURTIS WILKERSON With Wally Backman's defection, Leyland greeted Wilkerson with open arms.

KEY COMEBACK: NEAL HEATON With all the free-agent fliers, a consistent performance is needed from Heaton, who has a

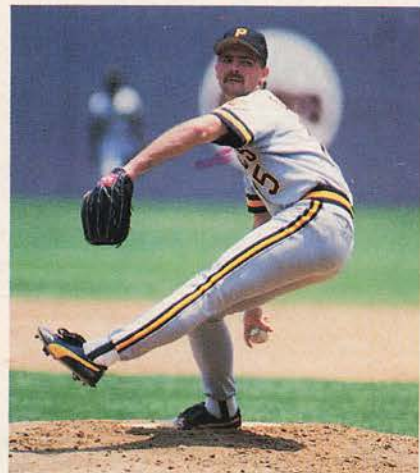


Key to the Pirates: Bobby Bonilla is a devastating offensive force.

history of being good for only half a season. Last season: 6-0 through mid-May, 6-9 the rest of the way.

KEY ROOKIE: MIKE YORK York was 1-1 with a 2.84 ERA in four games with the Bucs in '90.

DO IT AGAIN: JEFF KING, JAY BELL They were the unsung heroes of a championship team. Bell provided stable defense at an important spot (shortstop) and got on base enough to score 93 runs. King slugged 14 homers in his first full season and played solidly at third base.



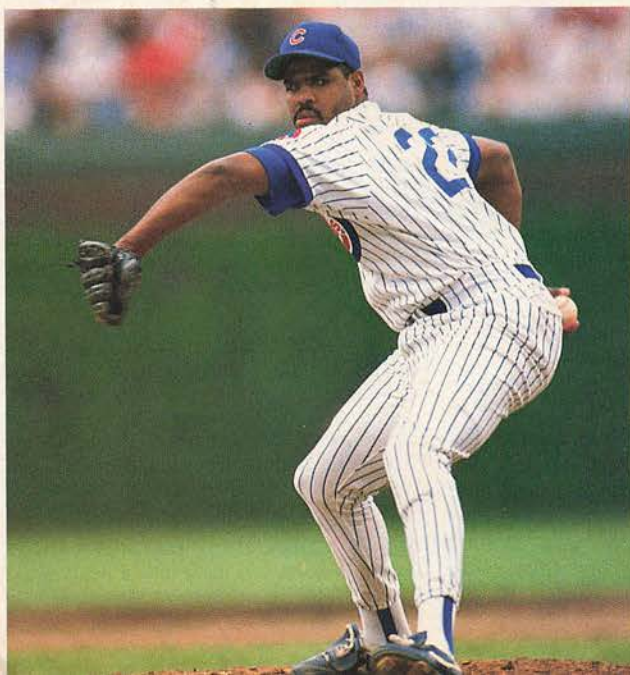
Key to the Pirates: Doug Drabek must win big again if Pittsburgh is to repeat.

CHICAGO CUBS

1 RYNE SANDBERG He's only the greatest second baseman to crash the majors since Hall of Famer Rogers Hornsby. When Sandberg is in a slump, he's *still* one of baseball's best hitters. Just about every GM alive says that if they had to start a team, they'd start with Sandberg. He led the NL in homers last year with 40 and in total bases with 344. He also drove in 100 runs, scored 116 and hit .306. His defense was impeccable to boot. "There's simply not a better all-around player—*anywhere*," says Dodgers coach Joey Amalfitano.

2 RICK SUTCLIFFE OK, so he's 34 and is coming off a year in which he had zero wins and a 5.91 ERA in five starts after undergoing arthroscopic surgery for torn cartilage in his right shoulder. But he's still the guy the Cubs pitching staff takes its cue from. When Sutcliffe is healthy, he's winning and the Cubs are serious contenders. Check out the Cubs' championship seasons in '84 and '89: Sutcliffe won 16 games both times. For Mike Harkey and Shawn Boskie to flourish this year, Sutcliffe has to be on the mound, not on the DL.

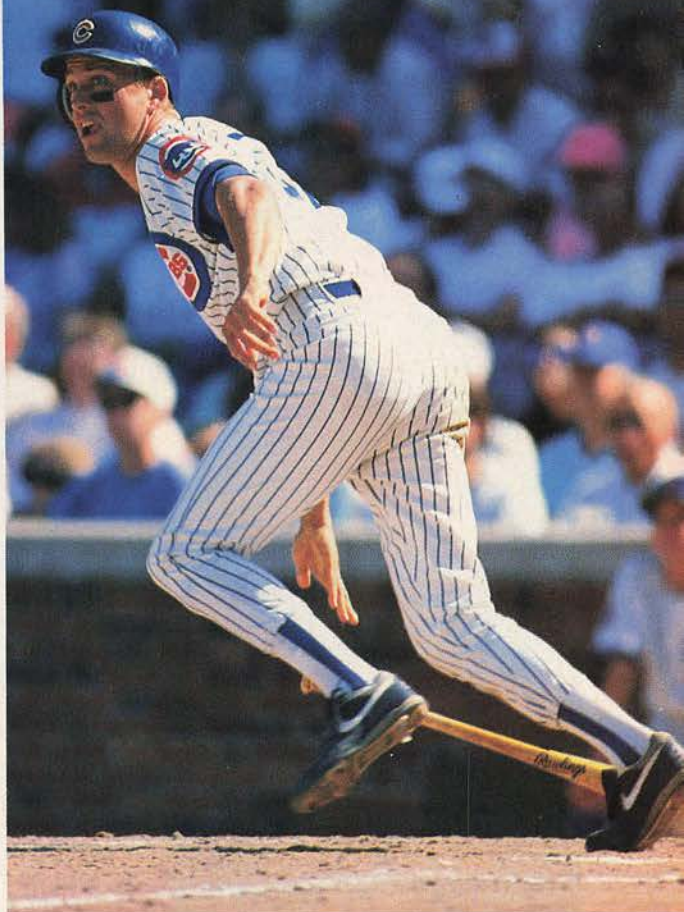
Key to the Cubs: Mike Harkey will be Chicago's 20-win man if he stays injury-free.



3 MIKE HARKEY First of all, he's got to get over this injury thing. When he does, he'll be to the Cubs what Drabek is to the Pirates. Anyway, someone's gotta take Sutcliffe's spot as staff leader in '92, and that someone is Harkey. He has the demeanor—and the stuff. But after two straight years of shoulder problems, people are raising eyebrows.

4 SHAWN DUNSTON What he needs to do is shut his mouth and play ball, something he does very well. All winter, he whined about the big bucks the Cubs were stuffing into the pockets of free agents Danny Jackson, George Bell and Dave Smith and not his. What he *should* have been talking about was how much his club improved and how dedicated it is to winning. Eventually, Dunston got his \$2 million. Now he doesn't have to concentrate on his bank account and can focus on *improving* his game. He's one of the few shortstops with power (17 HR) and speed (25 steals). He's also outstanding defensively, with a rocket for an arm. What he needs to do is become more patient (15 walks) and get on base more (.283 on-base percentage won't cut it).

5 DAVE SMITH If there's one thing the Cubs desperately needed, it was a dependable closer. After watching—and wincing at—Mitch Williams and then Paul Assenmacher, Cubs management decided it had more than enough heart-attack scares. So when Smith became a new-look free agent, the Cubs couldn't move quick enough to get his name on the dotted line. The fact that Smith is 36 is meaningless. His arm is half that age; he's averaged only 61 innings per season since '85. Smith.



The Cubs' Keystone: Mark Grace can hit .300 in his sleep.

10th on the all-time list in saves, has averaged 27 saves a season since '85, blows only three or four saves a year and gives up about one or two homers a year. "Getting Smith may have clinched the division for the Cubs," says one AL scout.

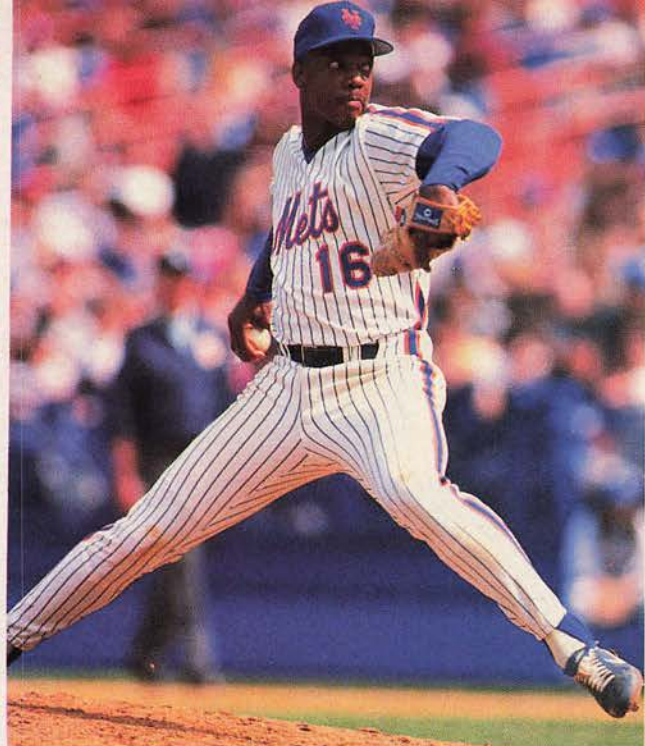
KEYSTONE: MARK GRACE He can hit .300 and drive in 80 runs in his sleep. This might even be the year Grace wins the batting title.

KEY NEWCOMER: GEORGE BELL Get ready Bleacher Bums—you're gonna have a lot more souvenirs flying in your direction. Look for Bell to smack 40 homers.

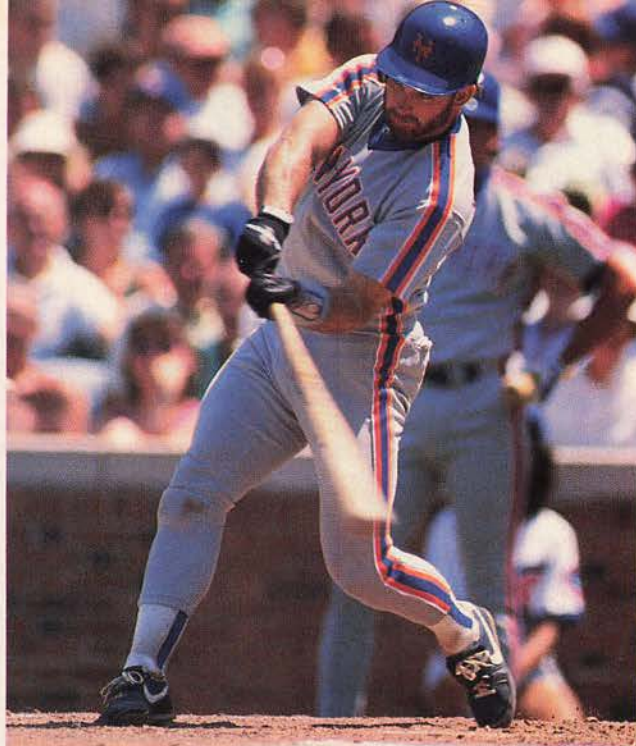
KEY COMEBACK: JEROME WALTON After winning Rookie of the Year in '89, Walton made too many rounds in the off-season for endorsement purposes, which is why he went from .293 to a soft .263.

KEY ROOKIES: LANCE DICKSON, GARY SCOTT LHP Dickson, the Cubs' No. 1 pick in the '90 draft, had a 0.94 ERA with 111 strikeouts and 18 walks in 76 minor-league innings last year. He's a stud. Third base has been a problem for five years. Scott will end that.

DO IT AGAIN: HECTOR VILLANUEVA He hit seven homers in his first 114 major-league at-bats. If he's for real, can you imagine what the lineup will be with him, Bell, Sandberg, *et al.*?



TOM D'APACE



RON VESELY

NEW YORK METS

1 DWIGHT GOODEN When he went 24-4 with a 1.53 ERA in '85, there was no place for Doc to go except down. He can win 19 games, and people sigh and say, "Big deal." On a staff where just about everyone is a stopper, Gooden is almost overlooked. Don't be misled: Doc is *the man* on the Mets' staff. "He still has a mystique about him, a certain aura," says manager Bud Harrelson. "Everyone still looks at him as our stopper." He may have lost a few miles per hour off his fastball, but he's become more of a complete pitcher with the utilization of his snappy curve and great change. "He used to be just a thrower," says Montreal's Rodgers. "Now he's a pitcher."

2 HOWARD JOHNSON With Darryl Strawberry gone, the pressure is on HoJo to have a monster year. We're not just talking about a 30-homer, 100-RBI year. We're talking about lighting up the stat sheet with a 40-homer, 125-RBI campaign. He's certainly capable of it, having hit 36 homers twice in the last four years. If he wasn't so patient, he'd probably launch five to eight more homers a year.

3 KEVIN McREYNOLDS If the pressure is on HoJo, it's *really* on McReynolds. It's about time he puts up

some Strawberry-type numbers: 35 homers, 110 RBIs. God knows, we've been waiting long enough. To some, McReynolds has been an underachiever; he's never hit 30 homers or driven in 100 runs, and he's never played in the All-Star Game. To others, McReynolds is a model of consistency; he's always in the 24- to 29-homer, 80- to 90-RBI range. This year, he has to make his presence felt more than ever before.

4 VINCE COLEMAN Now that the Mets have been transformed from a power-hitting club to a track team, they couldn't have come up with a better guy to kick up the most dust than Coleman. He's the key to the Mets' ignition, the perfect leadoff man. "He's the one ingredient, the one dimension we've lacked the last few years," says GM Frank Cashen. How ironic. Wasn't it Cashen who stripped the club of its running game when he dealt Lenny Dykstra and Mookie Wilson, transactions that set the Mets back a few years? The dilemma has been rectified with Coleman, a frightening offensive weapon who's won the NL stolen base title every year he's been in the majors (that's six, if you're counting).

5 FRANK VIOLA There aren't many No. 2 guys as good as this guy. Then again, he'd be the ace on 22 other clubs. If something ever happens to Gooden (injury or slump), Viola's importance increases tenfold. Luckily, the Mets are in good hands. Viola is the winningest left-hander in baseball over the last nine seasons and is the only major-league pitcher to make at least 35 starts in each of the last seven sea-

TOP LEFT: Key to the Mets: Dwight Gooden is still the ace of the staff.

TOP RIGHT: Key to the Mets: Howard Johnson must put up MVP-type numbers to compensate for the loss of Darryl Strawberry.

sons. After struggling in his abbreviated first season in New York (5-5, 3.38), he turned it up a couple of notches last year, going 20-12 with a 2.67 ERA.

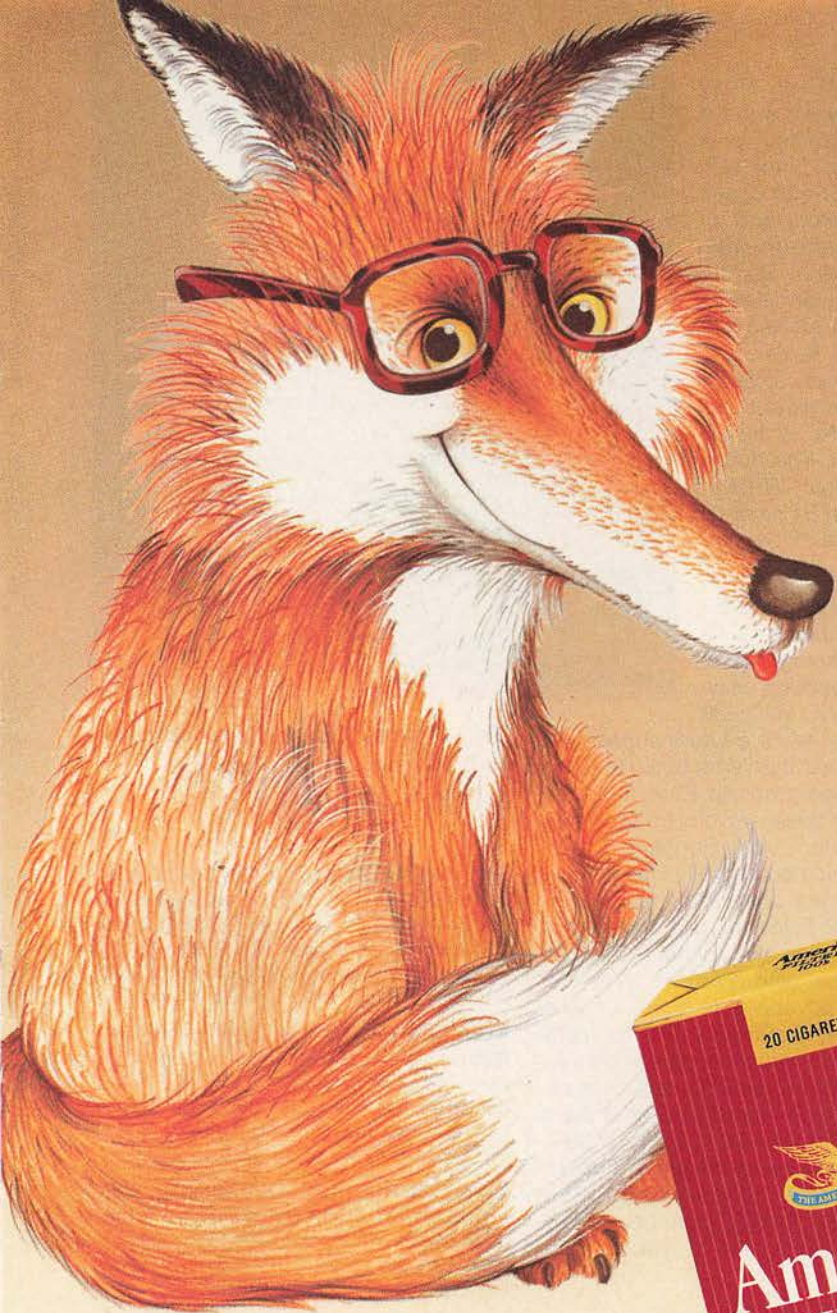
KEYSTONE: JOHN FRANCO Name one guy more dependable than Franco. Can't. Because he doesn't exist. Franco's save totals the last five years: 29, 32, 39, 32, 33. And he blows a save about once every two months.

KEY NEWCOMER: HUBIE BROOKS Brilliant move, acquiring Brooks, one of the most positive clubhouse presences in baseball since Don Baylor. He's also a helluva hitter.

KEY COMEBACK: SID FERNANDEZ Fourteen losses? It doesn't seem possible that someone of Fernandez's caliber could lose that many—*especially* on a club as good as his and *especially* when NL batters hit a *league-low* (for starters) .200 against him. Watch, he'll probably win 14.

KEY ROOKIES: JULIO VALERA, ANTHONY YOUNG When the Mets needed someone to start a crucial early September game against Pittsburgh, they called on Valera, not Ron Darling or Bobby Ojeda. That's how much the club thinks of him. Young is the next Doc Gooden; he was 15-3, 1.65 at Double-A.

DO IT AGAIN: DAVE MAGADAN If .328 wasn't a fluke, a batting title is next.



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MONTREAL
EXPOS

1 DENNIS MARTINEZ He's one of baseball's great Cinderella stories. Once a key starter on those great Orioles staffs of yore, Martinez hit bottom in the mid-'80s. He became an alcoholic. "I was in bad shape," he says. Baltimore had enough of him and traded him to Montreal for utilityman Rene Gonzales in June of 1986. "I knew it was time to wake up and straighten myself out," Martinez says. He did, but his pitching was far from dazzling. When he was a free agent in '87, no one called. He worked out with Single-A Miami and was re-signed by Montreal in May. All he's done since then is compile a 52-35 record and establish himself as one of the top right-handers in the NL. "Without Dennis," says manager Buck Rodgers, "we don't win."

2 ANDRES GALARRAGA Talk to Rodgers about Galarraga, and he'll sigh. Then cringe. Don't get Buck wrong, he likes Galarraga. He just wishes The Cat would roar a little more and halt his mysterious statistical nose-dive. The last three seasons, nearly every one of Galarraga's key offensive stats have gone south. After hitting .305 in '87, he's dipped to .302, .257 and .256. His homers have fallen from 29 in '88 to 23 to 20. His RBIs have gone from 92 to 85 to 87. Meanwhile, his strikeouts have risen from 153 to 158 to 169.

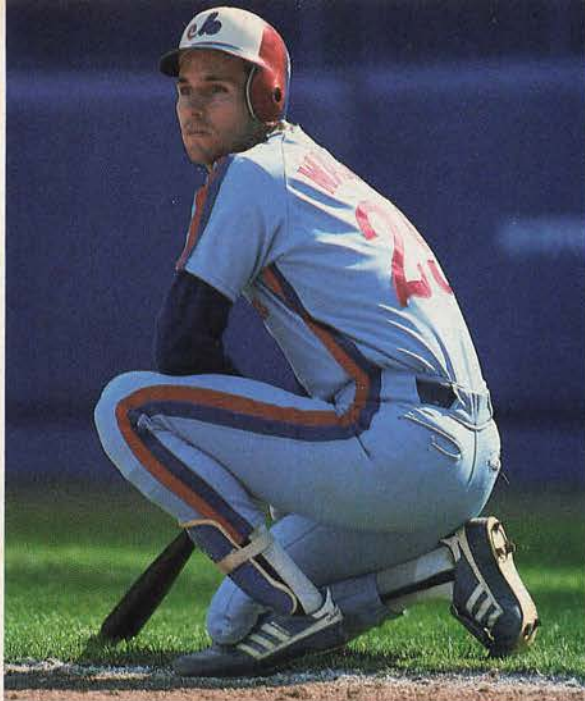
3 TIM BURKE There probably isn't a more underrated closer in baseball than Burke. He had 28 saves in '89 and found a way to save 20 games last year despite suffering a hairline fracture of the fibula in his right calf. Of concern is Burke's tendency to blow saves and getting lit up by lefties. He blew 11 saves in '89 but improved to just five last year. Lefties hit .239 against him in '89 and a *resounding* .285 last year. For the Expos to be in the race, they need Burke to be consistent and healthy.

4 LARRY WALKER When the Expos shopped Tim Lincecum around the last few years, they wanted a left-handed slugger to stick in between right-handers Galarraga and Tim Wal-

lach. When they couldn't swing such a deal, they settled for a right-handed hitter with some power and speed (Ivan Calderon) and an excellent set-up man (Barry Jones). So the burden falls on Walker, a promising left-handed-hitting right fielder who hit 19 homers, stole 21 bases and finished second in the NL in assists as a rookie. The downside is that Walker drove in just 51 runs, hit .241 and struck out 112 times.

5 DELINO DESHIELDS He wound up being one of the most exciting players in the NL last year as a rookie. "He's a future superstar," says Rodgers. If only he could learn to run the bases properly. Every time the guy gets on base—which is often—"it's an adventure," says Rodgers. Example: DeShields bunts Kelly Downs' first pitch and bolts down the line. The Giants' pitcher fields the ball and throws it away. Dancing off second, DeShields rattles Downs, whose next pitch is wild; DeShields advances to third. On the next offering, DeShields tries to score on an infield grounder and is thrown out. Pretty dumb for a guy who was recruited by Rollie Massimino as a point guard. Still, DeShields batted .289, stole 42 bases and played a brilliant second base. "He's an electrifying player," says former manager Bobby Winkles. "He's like a young Tim Raines."

KEYSTONE: TIM WALLACH He's one of the steadiest, classiest and most well-respected players in the game. Always expect 90 to 100 RBIs, 20 HRs, 30 doubles and a .275 to .300 average.



BRYAN YABLONSKY

The Expos' Keystone: Montreal can always depend on Tim Wallach.

KEY NEWCOMERS: IVAN CALDERON, BARRY JONES Calderon is underrated; he has power (14 HRs), speed (32 SBs) and is a decent run producer (74 RBIs). As for Jones, there wasn't a better set-up man in the business last year; he went 11-4, 2.31.

KEY COMEBACK: NELSON SANTOVENIA He went from .250 and five homers in a part-time catching role in '89 to .190 and a demotion to the minors in '90. Since starting catcher Mike Fitzgerald is prone to injury, the Expos need to count on Santovenia.

KEY ROOKIES: BRIAN BARNES, WILFREDO CORDERO Barnes was 1-1 with a 2.89 ERA in four starts for Montreal last year. He's 20-11 as a pro. Cordero will be the Expos' everyday shortstop by '92.

DO IT AGAIN: CHRIS NABHOLZ, BILL SAMPEN Each won his first six decisions. Nabholz finished 6-2, 2.83. Sampen went 12-7, 2.99. They're staff fixtures, so duplicating '90 is in order.

Key to the Expos: Delino DeShields is a future superstar.



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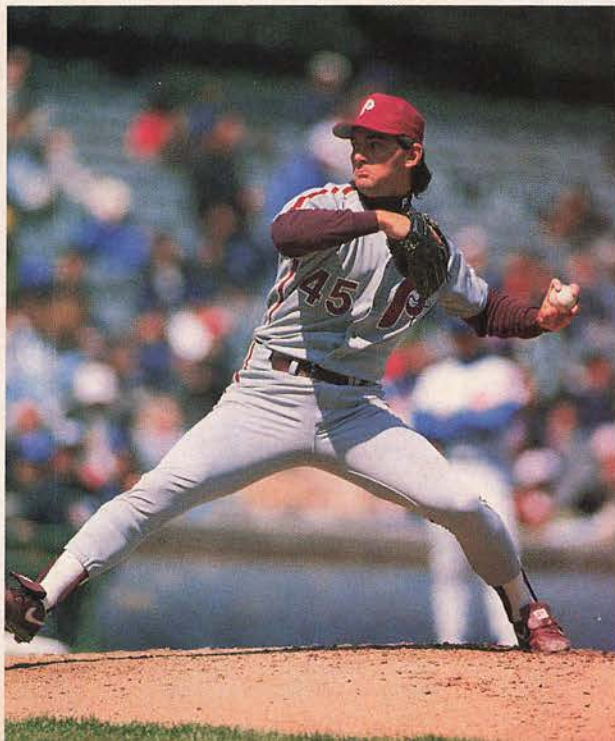
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PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

1 DALE MURPHY Granted, he is nowhere near the Dale Murphy of yesteryear, the guy who used to launch 40 homers and knock in 120 runs. Yet he still hit 24 homers, knocked in 83 runs "and gave us a legitimate lineup, a legitimate cleanup man," says manager Nick Leyva. Murphy's power production is vital to the Phillies, who do not have many guys capable of reaching the seats.

2 KEN HOWELL On most pitching staffs, he'd be a No. 3 guy, tops, and more likely a No. 4. But on the Phillies, he's the ace, which tells you all you need to know about the state of Phillies pitching. Howell has come a long way though. He was the 10th man on the Dodgers staff in '88. In '89, he tied for the team lead with 12 victories and had a respectable 3.44 ERA. Last year, he was off to an 8-3 start when he came down with tendinitis in his right shoulder. He's established himself as the leader of the staff, but he has to remain healthy, and he has to win if the

Key to the Phillies: If Terry (No-Hit) Mulholland duplicates last year's finish, Philadelphia will be stronger.



Phillies are to do anything positive.

3 TERRY MULHOLLAND The guy had a no-hitter, a 1.99 ERA and three complete games in his last 10 starts. Not too many NL pitchers—even the studs—could match that. "He's made dramatic improvement," says Leyva. His splitter was the key because it sets up everything else—his fastball, slider and change. He threw his splitter more for strikes, enabling him to throw less pitches per inning. His history was throwing too many pitches early and dragging himself back to the dugout by the fifth inning. If he takes it up another notch, it makes the Phillies that much tougher.

4 DARREN DAULTON Daulton is an emerging star who's coming off a season in which he had career highs in average (.268), homers (12), RBIs (57) and doubles (30). He led NL catchers in games, on-base percentage, runs, walks and doubles. He hit .297 and had 39 RBIs in the second half. He threw out 39 percent of the runners who attempted to steal against him—far and away one of the best ratios in baseball.

5 VON HAYES He's been on the trading block for more than two years now, but dealing him right now would be a mistake. Every club needs power, and even with Hayes, the Phillies don't have much. If third baseman Charlie Hayes or his possible replacement, Dave Hollins, hit 15 homers, and Ricky Jordan chips in with 20 to go along with Murphy's 25 dingers, then Hayes can be dealt, especially since he's 32.

KEYSTONE: LENNY DYKSTRA He's the man who starts it up, the man the Phillies revolve around. His run at the batting title was no fluke. This guy is one of the most exciting players in the game today.

KEY NEWCOMER: WALLY BACKMAN The days of Dykstra and Backman return. Smart move signing free-agent Backman, especially since Mickey Morandini is not ready to take over at second base on an everyday basis.

KEY COMEBACK: RICKY JORDAN After hitting .293 with 118 RBIs in his first 1½ seasons (213 games), he sunk to .241-5-44 and a trip to the minors. His comeback gives Leyva flexibility.



Key to the Phillies: Dale Murphy is Philadelphia's main power source.

KEY ROOKIES: MICKEY MORANDINI, WES CHAMBERLAIN Morandini was slated as the everyday starter when he was promoted after the Tommy Herr trade. But he needs one more year at Triple-A. Chamberlain is the left fielder of the future.

DO IT AGAIN: PAT COMBS His 10 wins topped the staff, but there are still nightmares of Combs being another Bruce Ruffin or Don Carman.

N.L. HOME RUNS

LAST YEAR'S BEST

New York, 172. The Mets had three players who hit 23 or more homers, tops in the majors. The 37 homers from the departed Strawberry, the Dodgers' new right fielder, made the difference as the Mets hit 10 more homers than—surprise—Atlanta to capture the title. Kevin McReynolds followed Strawberry with 24 homers, and Howard Johnson had 23.

1991 PREDICTION

Chicago. With George Bell (202 career home runs) joining 1990 NL home run leader Ryne Sandberg in a lineup that also includes Andre Dawson and Shawon Dunston, look for the Cubs to edge San Francisco's terrifying trifecta of Kevin Mitchell, Will Clark and Matt Williams, and Los Angeles' Strawberry-Eddie Murray-Kal Daniels trio.

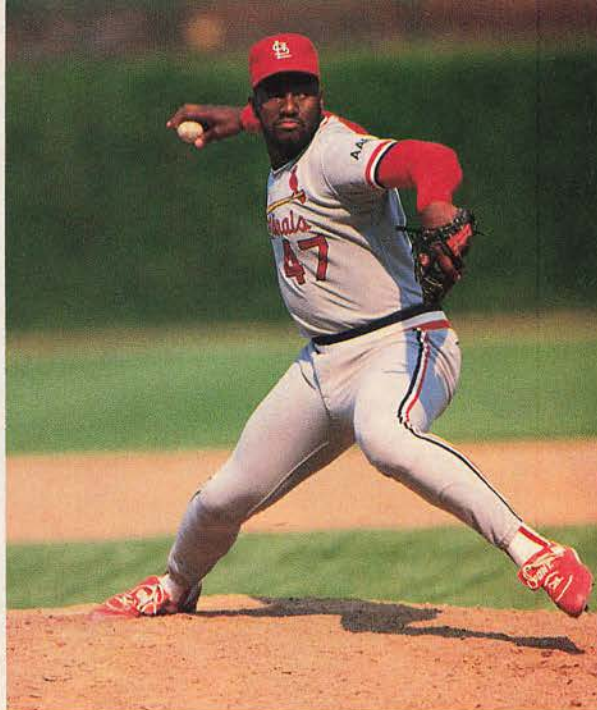
ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

1 JOE MAGRANE For the Cardinals to do anything positive at all, Magrane must turn his 10-17 record around. He must return to his '89 form (18-9, 2.91)—or something close to it—otherwise the Cards may be a complete joke. Magrane was so pitiful last year, left-handed hitters batted an astounding .287 against him. Overall, the league hit .264 against him. Don't look for him to have two bad years in succession. He's just too talented.

2 PEDRO GUERRERO When it comes to hitting the long ball, the Cardinals have historically ranked among baseball's worst. They always seem to have one—sometimes two—legitimate home run threats. The last 2½ seasons, that guy has been Guerrero. Can you win without at least one long-ball threat? Yes—if your staff consists of Cy Young, Sandy Koufax and Bob Gibson, and if you have Ty Cobb, Rod Carew and Wade Boggs in your lineup. Any questions as to why Guerrero is so important to the Cardinals?

3 TODD ZEILE Let's just hope—and you can bet the Cardinals are—that Zeile doesn't go completely in the tank because of his move from catcher to third base. Let's get this straight: Zeile loves catching and isn't particularly looking forward to playing third. Yet he's developed a nice relationship with likable manager Joe Torre and will make the transition for the good of the club. Torre has a helluva job in front of him: keeping Zeile's spirits high when he returns to the dugout after making an error. Remember, Zeile's only in his second year in the majors.

4 JOSE DeLEON If Jose Rijo did it, DeLeon can too. Rijo, the Reds' ace, was actually considered more of an underachiever than DeLeon, who won 16 games in '89 and 13 in '88. But last year, DeLeon sunk to depths that perhaps no pitcher in history has experienced. For the second time in six years, he lost an eye-popping 19 games. Why? How? Well, first of all, there's not enough break on his breaking ball, and he hasn't mastered the splitter yet. So he gets killed with his fastball. If he gets more consistent with his splitter and breaking ball, he'll win. So will the Cardinals.



The Cardinals' Keystone: Lee Smith is one of baseball's most dependable closers.

5 RAY LANKFORD He made people forget about Willie McGee shortly after he arrived from Louisville. He's a McGee clone—and may turn out to be a better all-around player. He's a prototype center fielder; he'll get to everything and then some. He'll hit .300 with 40 doubles and 30 to 40

balls in the gap, and he fields.

DO IT AGAIN: BOB TEWKSBURY He came out of nowhere to win 10 games, post a 3.47 ERA and average just 0.93 walks every nine innings. Remember, we're talking about a guy who was nothing more than a journeyman and a guy who's been DL'ed five times in little more than two years in the majors.

steals. "He's ready for the majors," says Torre.

KEYSTONE: LEE SMITH Phone it in now: 28 saves.

KEY NEWCOMER: JUAN AGOSTO He's a super set-up/middle man who has a career ERA of 3.26. With Ken Dayley gone, Agosto was a big free-agent pickup.

KEY COMEBACK: MILT THOMPSON If Bernard Gilkey falls coming out of the gate, Thompson is Torre's left fielder. But he can't duplicate his .218 average.

KEY ROOKIE: BERNARD GILKEY Cardinals fans: You're going to love Gilkey, your new leadoff man. He can fly, he hits

N.L. BATTING AVERAGE

LAST YEAR'S BEST

Cincinnati, .265. Six Reds (regulars and reserves) hit .299 or better. Four of them hit .300 or higher. No other team in the National League matched that offensive excellence, and that's why the Reds were able to nip the Cubs by two points for the batting crown. Two surprises—Hal Morris and Mariano Duncan—wound up being the Reds' top two hitters. Morris (.340) didn't even step in as the everyday first baseman until July. Duncan bashed his way into the lineup with a monster spring.

1991 PREDICTION

San Francisco. The addition of Willie McGee, the return of Kevin Bass, the maturation of emerging superstar Matt Williams and an MVP-type year from Will Clark gives the Giants an edge over the rejuvenated Dodgers.

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OAKLAND ATHLETICS

1 DAVE STEWART Who else regularly earns more wins than Cy Young votes? In the last four years, Stewart has gone 84-45 and has been underappreciated by nearly everyone but the A's. Dennis Eckersley may have made the A's staff what it is, but Stewart has made Eckersley. In those four seasons, Stew accounted for 55 percent (41 of 75) of the team's complete games, including 11 of 18 last year. The composition of the rotation makes it necessary for Stewart to continue bearing the burden.

2 JOSE CANSECO Jose, can you see what's happening? You're holding the wrecking ball that can smash the foundations of a team trying to get over the dynasty hump. Has anyone ever come off 37 homers and 101 RBIs in a part-time season (481 at-bats) with such a negative image? (Alright, maybe Dick Allen.) Time to do some serious soul-searching as to why. When Tony La Russa yanked Canseco out of the final World Series game, he was venting a full season's frustrations with the fragile, conceited slugger. It also illustrated that Oakland manage-

ment won't take much more guff from Jose. If GM Sandy Alderson decides the time has come to get rid of this problem, even he knows that would unleash the wrecking ball.

3 RICKEY HENDERSON Now you know why baseball writers don't hold day jobs as stock brokers. Their tip on Henderson last year was that the big contract would douse his game. They were off by only 180 degrees. All he did was contend for his first batting title, which he barely missed with a career-high .325, and win his first MVP award. He also came within three slides of leaving Lou Brock's record for total steals in the dust. The A's needed every bit of his 119 runs, 65 steals and 64 extra-base hits.

4 CURT YOUNG He's the reason Alderson was so nonchalant about shedding Scott Sanderson, a 17-game winner. As Young turns 30, he is being counted on as a pivot man in the rotation, not just an add-on. There is pressure on ex-Padre Eric Show too, but Young is more critical as the only projected lefty starter. Historically, southpaws are seen as late bloomers. Young has enough starting experience (125 starts in the last five years) to take off. But a breakthrough by him is not a given. His walk-strikeout ratio, never outstanding, has declined the last three years.

5 MIKE MOORE If Moore repeats his 1990 performance, the A's won't. Bob Welch's unconscious sea-

Key to the A's: Rickey Henderson is Oakland's all-world performer.

son bailed him out once, but Welch can't keep pitching for two people. Moore is on trial after a complete and stunning reversal from his 19-11, 2.61-ERA season of 1989. In a sense, all the dire forecasts that greeted his move from Seattle anonymity into the Oakland spotlight kicked in a year late. He was hit hard (11 more hits in almost 43 fewer innings) and went from a 2-to-1 strikeout-walk ratio to more passes (84) than whiffs (73). Moore may not be soft—the label he wore in Seattle—but after one counterimage season, has he grown content?

KEYSTONE: DENNIS ECKERSLEY He had 33 saves and a 1.56 ERA in 1989, and people said, "Oakland better brace for a downturn." So his 1990 numbers were 48 and 0.61.

KEY NEWCOMER: VANCE LAW, ERNEST RILES With snowmobile-accident victim Carney Lansford possibly out for the year, Law was a master pickup. With light-hitting Mike Gallego and injury-prone Walt Weiss around, Riles will be one busy utility infielder.

KEY ROOKIE: STEVE CHITREN He has zip on his fastball, faith in his breaking ball, the right mental make-up and had 27 saves in the Southern League.

KEY COMEBACK: WALT WEISS Sure, all he's coming back from is one missed World Series, but it shows how much the A's missed him.

DO IT AGAIN: BOB WELCH His program went haywire, causing a jump from his customary 17 wins to 27. Few believe he can stay in that orbit.

Key to the A's: Jose Canseco must cause trouble for opposing pitchers, not for himself.



CHICAGO WHITE SOX

1 MELIDO PEREZ Unable to sustain the promise of his rookie season, Perez hasn't taken charge as the staff ace. So it's time for Plan B. All that is required of him now, in a deeper rotation, is to be a dependable midlevel starter. At 25, Perez is still capable of reaching a loftier status. If he can surpass .500, his impact should be obvious on a team that finished nine lengths behind Oakland with Perez's 13-14 mark. Chicago's other young starters performed at peak levels in 1990. Only Perez appears to offer the margin for improvement that could make a significant difference.

2 BOBBY THIGPEN His 57-save performance may go down as one of the most conspicuous one-season quirks ever. He simply lacks the consistency to ever approach it again, and he profited immensely from manager Jeff Torborg continually getting him to the mound at the right time. Unlike Oakland's reliance on Eckersley, the Sox neither rely on nor need the same



Key to the White Sox: Bobby Thigpen won't save 57 games again, but 40 will do just fine.

level of performance. Torborg used Thigpen to buy both team confidence and time for a young rotation to mature. But the Sox can't afford a total fade by him either. He must remain reliable, if not spectacular, especially in the early going, while the team is still feeling itself out.

3 RON KARKOVIC Carlton Fisk's caddy has been brought along ideally. He must now be ready to fly on his own for the welfare of a team that cannot base its title hopes on expectations that a 43-year-old catcher will keep behaving as a 23-year-old. His defensive assets never questioned, Karkovic's offensive development under batting guru Walt Hriniak's care and feeding reached acceptable levels with back-to-back averages of .264 and .246. Not much, but a far cry from his buck-sixty-eight pre-Hriniak days. With his glove, the same production over 100-plus games would be enough.

4 FRANK THOMAS He's 6-foot-5, 240 pounds and looks like he should be five miles north of Comiskey—at Soldier Field, playing linebacker for the Bears. He wields a bat the way Paul Bunyan wielded an ax. He could be the next franchise player. In his half season, Thomas contributed a .330 average, but everyone is convinced he has much more to give. Smartly, he curtailed his swing last summer to focus on learning the pitchers. He clubbed 49 career homers (a team record)

The White Sox's Keystone: Ozzie Guillen is the glue of the ChiSox.

A.L. FIELDING

LAST YEAR'S BEST

Toronto, .986. With defensive whiz Tony Fernandez at short, the consistent Manny Lee at second and Kelly Gruber at third, the Jays had a mere 86 errors, the lowest in the majors. Oakland's drum-tight defense, which committed just 87 errors, enabled the A's to finish a close second.

1991 PREDICTION

Toronto. The Jays will miss Fernandez at short, but newcomer Roberto Alomar will show those AL second basemen a thing or two. Waving goodbye to George Bell and his iron glove in left field and welcoming Gold Glover Devon White in center are the clinchers. Oakland will be right on Toronto's heels, even without the consistent Carney Lansford at third because of his off-season injury.

for Auburn University, so you know the big swing was in hiding. For 60 games, he was too good to be true. He could take 30 off his average and add it to his homer total—heck, he'll have to, for he's the main power source.

5 CORY SNYDER When assessing Ron Schueler's rookie GM work, forget the Tim Lincecum move, a fair-value trade. But how often do you get your hands on a prime-aged outfielder with Snyder's range of potential talents for a litter of journeymen pitchers? Snyder came cheap because of his last two flat seasons in Cleveland. But this is a guy who hit 83 homers in his first 2½ seasons. Hriniak is just the one to show him how to cut down on his strikeouts. Chicago needs his power production to creep closer to Oakland.

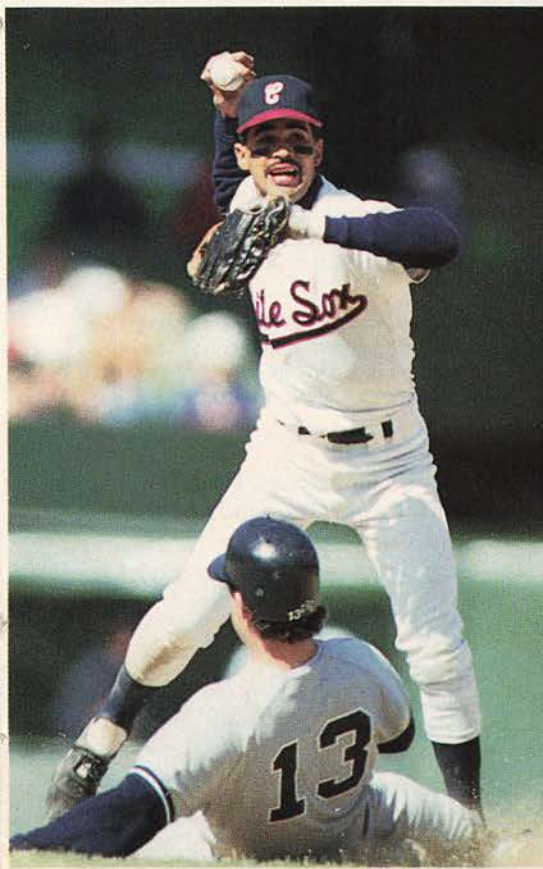
KEYSTONE: OZZIE GUILLEN No one plays better D at such a vital position. He also hits .250 to .280 and drives in 50 runs.

KEY NEWCOMER: TIM RAINES Sure, the Sox are excited to have him, and if he is equally excited to be in a new league and back atop a lineup, he could give Rickey H. a run for the title of best leadoff man.

KEY ROOKIES: NORBERTO MARTIN, WILSON ALVAREZ Martin, an infielder, was .266-3-45 with 10 steals at Triple-A Vancouver; LHP Alvarez had 12 wins on two minor-league rungs.

KEY COMEBACK: SAMMY SOSA Casting a virtual sophomore in this light may seem daffy, but with so many peaking in 1990 for the 94-win upstart Sox, it's hard to expect more of anyone but Sosa, who slipped from .273 in his brief 1989 debut to .233 as a regular.

DO IT AGAIN: CARLTON FISK At 42, he hit .285 with 18 homers. At 43, it'll be a surprise if he repeats those feats.



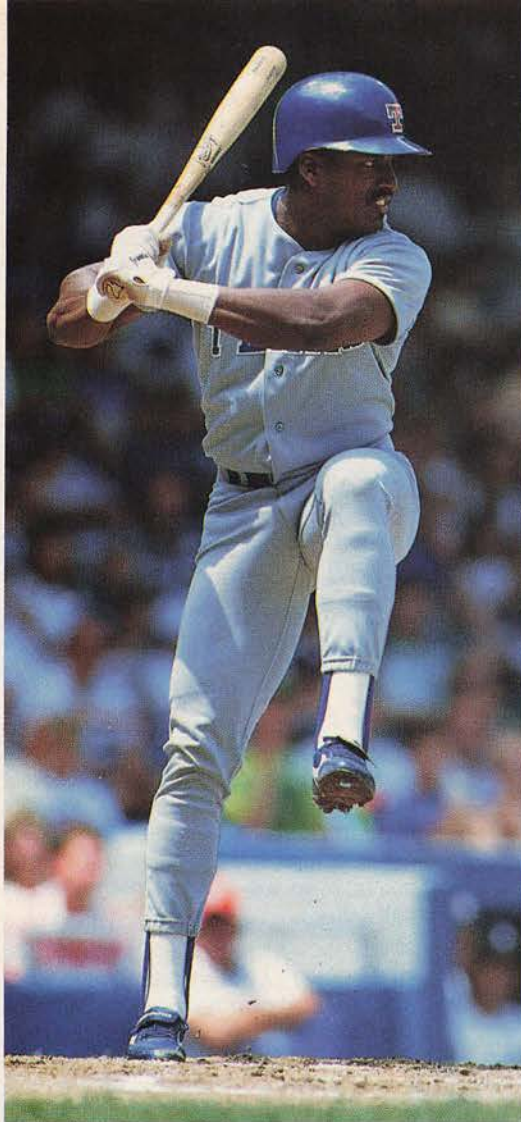
TEXAS RANGERS

1 NOLAN RYAN The Methuselah of the Mound contributes as much with his presence as he does with his pitches. In only two seasons, he has transformed the image of the Rangers from hapless to hopeful. He is a mentor, a role model. He doesn't have to throw another no-hitter or again lead the league in strikeouts—c'mon, Nollie, act your age—but he must find a way to keep taking the mound. Cut him out of the picture, and there's no predicting the extent of the depression.

2 RAFAEL PALMEIRO He's possibly one of the most underrated players around. Why? Maybe because he is lost in a generation of first basemen (Don Mattingly, Will Clark, Mark McGwire, Wally Joyner). Maybe because he was panned two years ago for going 580 at-bats without a game-winning RBI—a statistic that, thank heavens, no longer even exists. Career .296 hitters are also almost extinct. Palmeiro was the AL's third-leading hitter at .319 after a slow start last year, but his increasing power bears the most watching.

3 KENNY ROGERS You've got to know when to hold 'em; you've got to know when to fold...oops, wrong Rogers. But a formidable gambler just the same. After 139 relief appearances in two years, Rogers decided in September he wanted to start. Manager Bobby Valentine gave him a showcase. It turned into show-and-tell. Rogers showed promise—and Charlie Hough was told good-bye. Rogers becomes pivotal as the lone lefty starter with a background of 61 starts (58 in the minors) out of 313 pro appearances. But he's got to can the pseudo-Hrabosky madman act.

4 STEVE BUECHELE The Rangers tried snapping him back to life on the trading block. Then they threatened him with prospects Scott Coolbaugh and Dean Palmer. But you knew Valentine wouldn't easily give up on a scrapper who gets his uniform dirty. So he's still around. But he'd better bring along his bat this time. His low averages were tolerated for four years while he could phone in 16 homers and 55 RBIs. But a .215 mark didn't cut it next to seven homers and 30 RBIs. Conceding that an infield is only as



The Rangers' Keystone: Ruben Sierra is Texas' MVP candidate.

TOM DIPACE

A.L. BATTING AVERAGE

LAST YEAR'S BEST

Boston, .272. Amazingly, the Red Sox ran away with the batting crown, beating Cleveland by five points, and they did it with only one batter over .300 (Wade Boggs, of course)—and Boggs hit a sickly (at least for him) .302 at that. As it turned out, Boston won the crown because outfielders Mike Greenwell (.297) and Ellis Burks (.296) were 11th and 12th, respectively, in the league. No other club had three guys in the top 12.

1991 PREDICTION

Boston. Boggs will return to his typical territory (.330). Burks, who'll have an MVP-type year, won't be too far behind. Neither will brilliant second baseman Jody Reed, who hit .289 in '90. The only clubs that'll come close to Boston are Oakland and Chicago.

RICK STEWART/ALLSPORT USA

strong as its weakest link, the Rangers' eyes are on third base.

5 KEVIN BROWN Boy, talk about predictable. The Rangers have come to expect Brown to make around 26 starts, win 12 games—and not pitch after the first week of September. In 1989, his last appearance was on September 4. Last year, it was September 4. It's easy to tire of this "tired-arm" syndrome. But the recurrent shoulder problem can't be ignored. Brown does his best to save his arm; his 3.4 pitches-per-batter was the most economical work in the league. Texas can't plan for success without this competitive 26-year-old righty who's a steady influence on the staff and by far its most consistent cog.

KEYSTONE: RUBEN SIERRA

He wanted to throw back his .280, 16-HR, 96-RBI season. He's that good...and did you know he also has 35 steals out of 41 tries in three years?

KEY NEWCOMER: MARK PARENT

He's not a big name, but he fills a big need. Benito Santiago's former shadow in San Diego will platoon with lefty-hitting catcher Geno Petralli.

KEY ROOKIES: IVAN RODRIGUEZ, SCOTT CHIAMPARINO

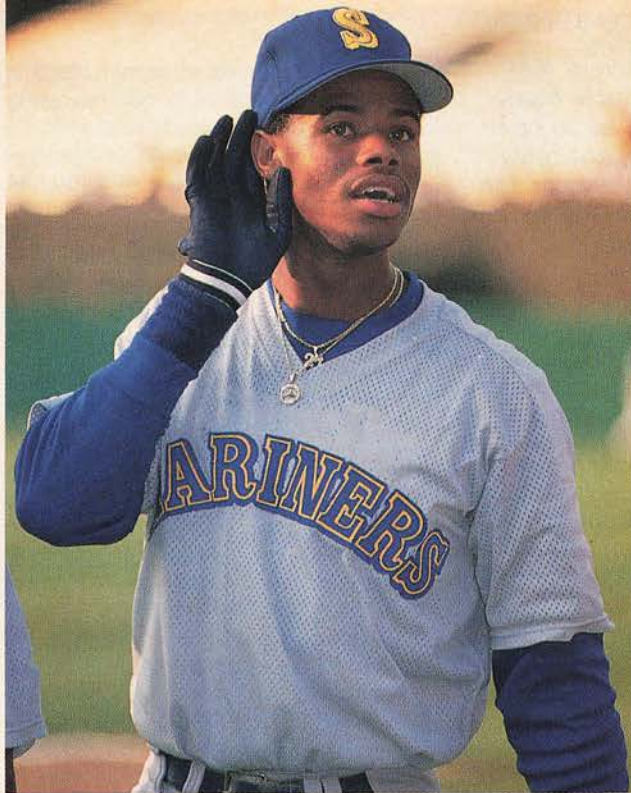
C Rodriguez already has a major-league glove at 19. RHP Chiamparino had a 2.63 ERA in six late-season Texas starts.

KEY COMEBACK: JEFF RUSSELL He had elbow surgery and only 10 saves in 1990, and the Rangers won 83 games. In 1989, he saved 38, and Texas won 83. You figure it out.

DO IT AGAIN: BOBBY WITT He was 17-10, including 12 straight victories. They always said he had it in him. Now will they be able to say it was a one-year quirk?

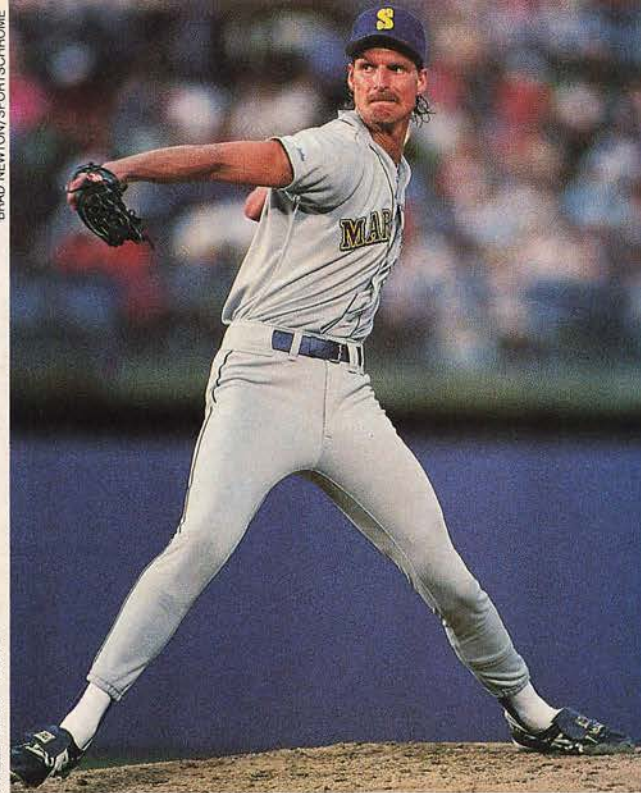
Key to the Rangers: Nolan Ryan is the Methuselah of the Mound for Texas.





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SEATTLE MARINERS

1 ALVIN DAVIS Davis can't be blamed if he subconsciously let some air out of his game last year. The Mariners paid big free-agent bucks for a first baseman (Pete O'Brien) and were telling Davis to hit and sit. That's the cue for most players to start thinking about their pensions. But here we're talking about a 30-year-old. Wake up, Alvin. Last year, he posted a triple trouble: .283, 17 HRs, 68 RBIs—all career lows. Even if O'Brien is out at first, rookie Tino Martinez may be in. So Davis has to get comfortable with that DH thing. He is the only one capable of offering Ken Griffey Jr. any protection in the lineup.

2 RANDY JOHNSON One of baseball's ugly ducklings—OK, at 6-foot-10 he's more of an ugly giraffe—turned elegant in 1990. Johnson, the tallest big-leaguer ever, went from gangly to gung ho. Surely, pitching coach Mike Paul deserves to take some bows. Even if Johnson chose to pitch a no-hitter during a summer in which everyone was throwing one, that feat succinctly summarized his development. Batters had noticed all along, hitting him at .216, lowest among all AL lefties. As Seattle's only southpaw starter,

an effective Johnson is needed to balance the staff. He doesn't have to repeat his 14 wins, but he had better come close to his 220 innings.

3 JAY BUHNER Owner of the classic power-hitter's build, this guy has hit 26 homers in 169 games as a Mariner. The downside: It took him three years. Equip him with a flak jacket already. Buhner smacks off walls the way moths bounce off light bulbs. His aggressive style earns admiration—and many bruises and breaks. He's got to find a way to stay healthy to be of any help. Manager Jim Lefebvre reads Buhner's RBI rate (one every 5½ at-bats) for the last two years and cries.

4 HAROLD REYNOLDS He packs a greater variety of talents than any teammate—except Junior. But he has to bring his game under control. That means quality rather than quantity. Sure, he stole 31 bases, but he was caught 16 times. Yes, he scored 100 runs, but he hit a five-year low .252. Right, he's a slick ground-gobbling fielder, but he had 19 errors. For two all-star years, Reynolds stood out on poor teams. With the Mariners improving around him, he's got to prove immune to the big-fish, small-bowl syndrome.

5 BILL SWIFT An underachieving alum of Team USA 1984, Swift has been an Olympian failure as a major-league starter. Can someone develop an allergy to starting every fifth day? Just look at Billy's edge as a long man in the bullpen last year: 2.39 ERA with six wins and as many saves. That fol-

TOP LEFT: The Mariners' Keystone: Ken Griffey Jr. is Willie Mays and Mickey Mantle rolled into one neat, little package

TOP RIGHT: Key to the Mariners: Randy Johnson is a tall order for opposing batters.

lowed scorned years in and out of the rotation that produced cumulative marks of 17-33 and a 5.34 ERA. Talk about throwing a switch. The rub is, the Mariners again have to take the risk. Matt Young's departure cornered them into having to consider Swift's return to the rotation—and if Scott Bankhead's comeback stalls, no maybe about it.

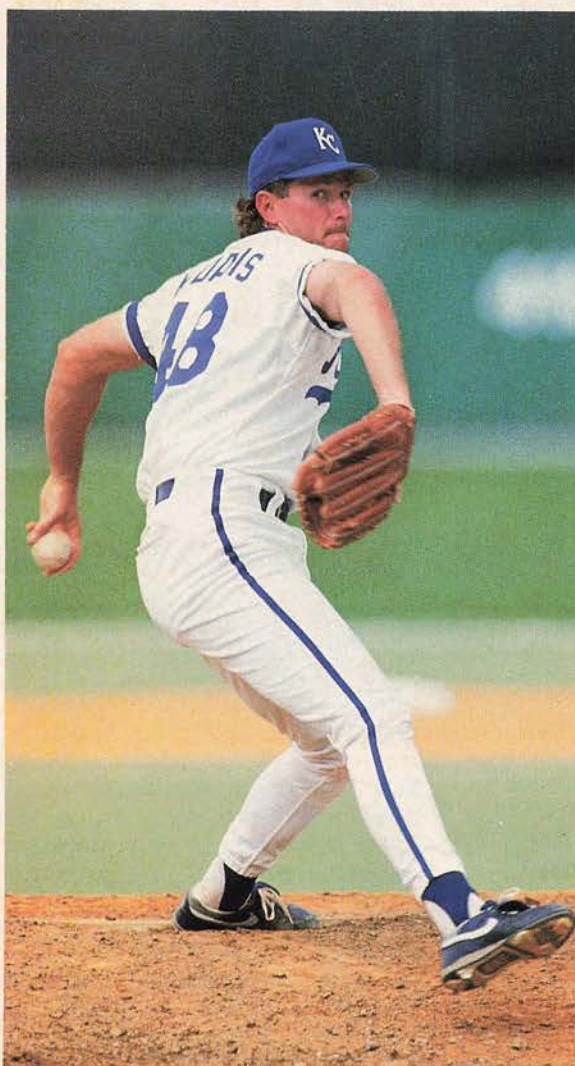
KEYSTONE: KEN GRIFFEY JR. After a super soph season (.300, 22 HRs, 80 RBIs) that validated the hype, Junior will be able to legally toast his future. He just turned 21 last November. That's not fair, is it?

KEY NEWCOMER: NO ONE After the Pete O'Brien debacle, can you blame them?

KEY ROOKIES: TINO MARTINEZ, RICH DELUCIA 1B Martinez hit .319 with 17 HRs and 92 RBIs in his Triple-A debut. RHP Delucia went from Single-A to the majors in one summer and went 13-11 with a 2.25 ERA along the way.

KEY COMEBACK: SCOTT BANKHEAD He went from 14-6 to zero wins and a shoulder requiring surgery. The M's are confident about a return that could influence the top of the division.

DO IT AGAIN: KEN GRIFFEY SR. His September (.377, 18 RBIs in 21 games, first Player of Week citation of career) was a fairy tale for the Geritol set.



The Royals' Key Comeback: Mark Davis has to save games, not blow them, in order for Kansas City to contend.

tough-turf acreage at Royals Stadium, the hitch in his swing and blah-blah.... But put ol' stubble face down for an impact season. He has a lot of pride to play for after going from folk hero to buffoon in record time in Los Angeles.

3 MIKE MACFARLANE He's the catcher who was finally able to push Bob Boone off the team. After three seasons in reserve, Macfarlane has his shot, and it couldn't have come under more stressful circumstances. He handles the bat well; last year, he posted one of the better RBI ratios (58 in 400 at-bats) on the team. But receivers are always judged through their partnership with the pitcher, and he has a motley crew to handle. The homegrown

catcher will play a significant role symbolically as well as practically in the Royals' rebuilding.

4 JEFF MONTGOMERY After an 18-save, 1.37-ERA season in '89, they tried to buy him out of his job with Mark Davis. So Montgomery came back with 24 saves, a 2.39 ERA and the boundless gratitude of a front office under siege. He now takes the precarious step from surprising success to expected success. Davis' fate remains clouded, and there is no longer a Steve Farr to fall back on. But the 29-year-old righty appears to be a special talent who can withstand the load. His cumulative AL record now stands at 20-10 with 43 saves and 235 strikeouts in 248 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings.

5 KEVIN SEITZER So maybe he'll never come around to take the batting title that was once conceded to be in his reach after a flashy debut. Seitzer's average has declined every year, down to .275 last season. But can he retain some semblance of consciousness when he bats with men on base? His frequent appearances in the

leadoff spot notwithstanding, there is no excuse for someone with his swing to be such a clutch ghost. Last year, he had 38 RBIs in 622 at-bats, or one every 16.4; for the last three years, he has 146 in 1,778. Last year, Seitzer may have become the first player to ever have more extra-base hits (42) than RBIs. It's a joke. With a repeat year from George Brett unlikely, Seitzer has to knock more people home.

KEYSTONE: BO JACKSON Mr. Know-It-All is a baseball gemstone—when he's on the field and not on the DL. One thing we really know about Bo is that he puts people in the stands.

KEY NEWCOMER: MIKE BODDICKER It's a familiar story ("Royals Sign Free-Agent Pitcher Off Best Season"). But Boddicker is calm and collected enough to rewrite the (Storm) Davis-style ending.

KEY ROOKIES: TERRY SHUMPERT, MEL STOTTLEMYRE JR. 2B Shumpert has extra-base pop and speed. RHP Stottlemyre is a long shot if the mound chaos persists.

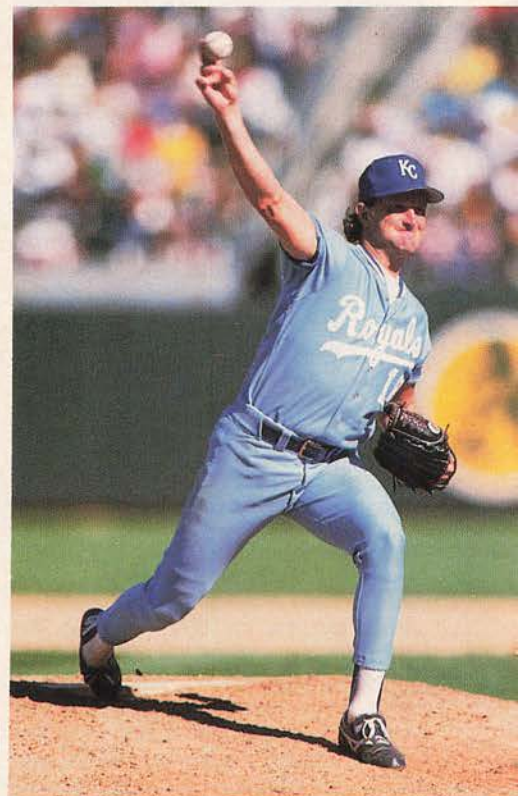
KEY COMEBACK: MARK DAVIS It's a crowded field, but the smell of a conceited lefty who pocketed the big bucks and went from 44 saves and a 1.85 ERA to six saves and 5.11 is hard to miss.

DO IT AGAIN: GEORGE BRETT It is permissible to bring into question a three-time batting king if the last of those crowns came at age 37 and represented a 47-point jump over what he'd hit at 36.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS

1 MARK GUBICZA/BRET SABERHAGEN They've got to be an entry; they both took a great fall, dropping from 38-17 in 1989 to 9-16 in 1990 and dragging the Royals with them. Saberhagen, pulled into the pits in July for elbow surgery, is a surer bet to make it back this year, especially since it ends in a "1." He's an odd fellow, having gone 61-22 in 1985, '87 and '89, and 36-48 in the evens. Gubicza has to overcome the old bugaboo, rotator-cuff damage. His problems actually date back to September of 1989, when he had just enough strength left in the shoulder to sign a three-year, \$9 million contract.

2 KIRK GIBSON Yeah, yeah... we know about his trick legs, the



Key to the Royals: It's an odd-number year, so expect a big year from Bret Saberhagen.

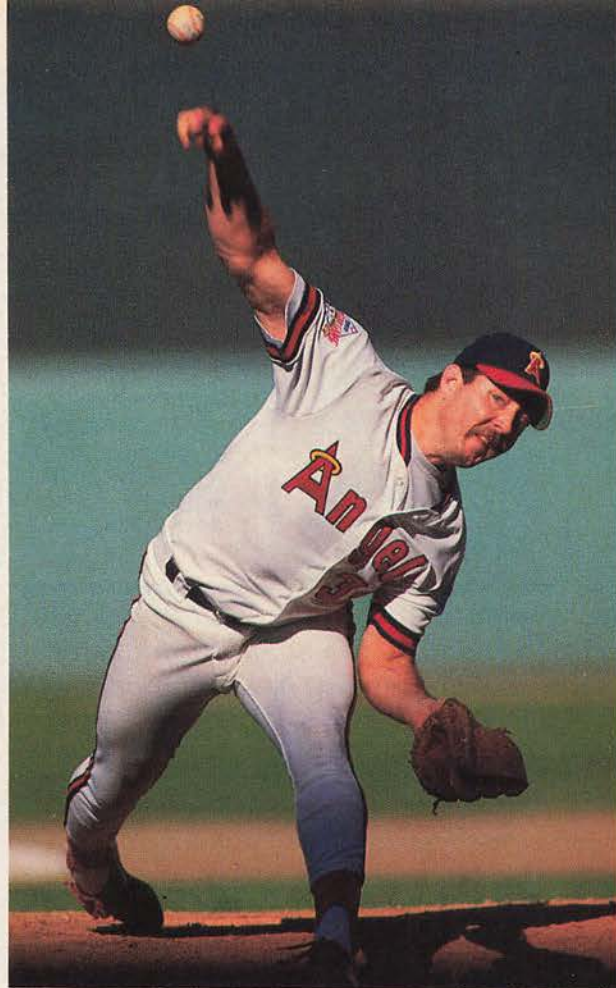
CALIFORNIA ANGELS

1 WALLY JOYNER The euphoria of 1986 and the even greater numbers and esteem of 1987 now echo hollow. Joyner may come back from a knee fracture that held him to 83 games—but he may not do it with the Angels. Either way, he dictates the team's fate. By staying and producing, he can energize the lineup. If he goes, and his alienation from the front office makes that likely, what the Angels get in return will be critical. Joyner seems a cinch to walk as a free agent after this year. Does California face up to that and trade him now? No other decision, or individual, bears as much influence on the Angels.

2 DAVE WINFIELD An audience of cynics greeted his arrival from New York after a year of absence and a month of .213 with the Yankees. With the Angels, Winfield started slowly and talked about needing time to find the flow. Darned if he didn't back it up. By season's end, he had 21 homers and 78 RBIs to accompany a .267 average, which, under the circumstances, was truly one of the most remarkable comebacks ever. Winfield also needed time to test the clubhouse flow. He's ready to provide leadership to a team starved for it.

3 BRYAN HARVEY The Angels aren't alone in having all their stopper eggs in one basket. But no one is as dependent on someone as erratic as Harvey. There are relievers who have good and off years. Harvey has good weeks, then implodes. Nothing will play more with a manager's mind. At his best, Harvey could be the best, combining the control that propels Eckersley with the heat of Thigpen—turned up a few notches. The fact he has struck out 160 batters in 119 innings the last two years should be convincing enough. He has 50 saves in that time—or seven fewer than Thigpen posted last year alone—because he has yet to earn Doug Rader's trust.

4 DICK SCHOFIELD With prospects of the infield being rebuilt around him, it's time Schofield stopped acting like a spoiled child and assumed some leadership responsibility. There were knocks against his work habits and dedication even before he managed to miss the first two months of last sea-



Key to the Angels: Bryan Harvey must have control to be a dominant closer.

son with a hamstring strain he'd suffered in the second exhibition game. Then he went out and made 17 errors in 99 games—after having committed just seven errors in 91 games in 1989. He did wind up with a career-high .255 average, hitting .311 in the final two months. So the tease continues.

5 JIM ABBOTT Of the California lefties, he dangles between stud (Chuck Finley) and dud (Mark Langston). But don't expect Abbott to be average for long. A veteran of two years in the majors and 23 years of will-testing living, his education is about over. From where he has come, you don't assess progress through mere numbers. Though, at 22-26, they aren't bad, considering the absence of minor-league experience. Remember, this is a guy who has been learning a change-up and curve on the job. He has gained the feeling he belongs. If that leads to comfort and confidence, Abbott could tip the aforementioned scale.

KEYSTONE: CHUCK FINLEY After back-to-back years totaling 34-18 with a 2.48 ERA, he's the lefty who can finally break the

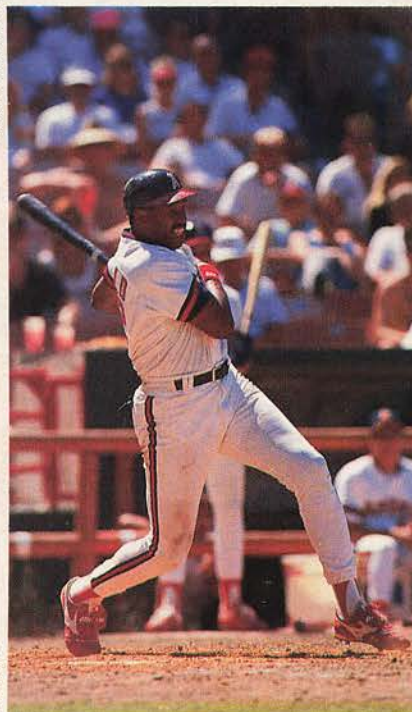
bank if baseball continues giving \$10 million deals to the likes of Bud Black.

KEY NEWCOMER: GARY GAETTI He has sunk to .229 with a whisper of his former power (16 homers, 85 RBIs), but the Angels hope they're getting something better than Jack Howell.

KEY ROOKIES: LUIS SOJO, BOBBY ROSE, SCOTT LEWIS 2B Sojo was Toronto surplus who rescues the Angels from no-range Johnny Ray. 3B Rose is hard-nosed and has a loud bat. RHP Lewis blew Rader away in two late-season starts.

KEY COMEBACK: MARK LANGSTON Dick Williams said it would be like this. Langston melted from pressure to justify his \$16 million pact. He has to prove tough enough to feed some crow.

DO IT AGAIN: LUIS POLONIA The 5-foot-8 gnarled who talks big fell 66 plate appearances shy of stealing the AL batting title.



Key to the Angels: Dave Winfield will surprise the cynics once again.

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MINNESOTA TWINS

1 RICK AGUILERA Necessity proved to be the mother of quite a 1990 invention: Aguilera as bullpen stopper—32 saves worth. But the Twins envisioned him as a starter when obtaining him from the Mets as part of the Frank Viola package, and the addition of Steve Bedrosian permits a return to Plan A. How well Aguilera handles the transition will reveal whether Minnesota has a prayer of avoiding the cellar. He's done it in the past, breaking into the Mets' rotation with a cumulative 31-17 record through his first three seasons.

2 KENT HRBEK He's one of baseball's premier part-time players. He has failed to reach 500 at-bats three times in the last four years—and, remarkably, has averaged 28 homers and 86 RBIs in those three seasons. Imagine the numbers Hrbek could crunch if he stopped missing games.

Considering their decimated state, the Twins need every drop of that missing production. To provide it, Hrbek has to stay healthy. Staying fit would help too. When they call him Doughboy, they aren't referring to the \$14 million contract under his belt but rather the gut hanging over it.

3 BRIAN HARPER With people finally believing in him, this is no time for Harper to call off the bluff and regress. It's tough to place any long-range confidence in a late bloomer, but the Twins now count on him. When he was 28, Harper was a lifetime .233 hitter. Then he got the wake-up call. For the three ensuing seasons in Minnesota, he has hit .305. More amazingly, he has struck out a total of 55 times in 1,030 at-bats.

4 ALLEN ANDERSON Let's just say he's not regarded as one of the league's gutsiest pitchers. In 1988, he was scratched from his last start to protect his league-leading ERA. Last year, with a green staff looking to his guidance—and after going 33-19 the previous two seasons—he folded up and finished 7-18. Though a young (27) veteran of three full years, he nonetheless is the dean of a crib staff. Anderson can either stay back and hope

that Aguilera and Jack Morris assume the leadership, or he can take stock of his career. Just being left-handed won't carry him forever.

5 STEVE BEDROSIAN The Twins gave up a super young arm (Johnny Ard) for Bedrosian, who at 33 has seen his best years and is suffering emotionally from family problems. But the Twins had success when they acquired an aging Jeff Reardon from Montreal a few years back, so maybe they're hoping Reardon magic strikes twice. The best thing about acquiring Bedrosian is that Minnesota is able to stabilize its starting rotation by moving Aguilera from closer to starter.

KEYSTONE: KIRBY PUCKETT An across-the-board swoon dented his reputation as baseball's top all-around talent, but who else could lose 51 hits (215 to 164) and still bat .298?

KEY NEWCOMER: CHILI DAVIS The Twins hope that Davis' bat replaces Gary Gaetti's.

KEY ROOKIES: SCOTT ERICKSON, RICHARD GARCES RHP Erickson was 5-0 in September. RHP Garces is a dark horse for the bullpen after 28 saves and a 1.81 ERA in Single-A.

KEY COMEBACK: DAVID WEST He went 7-9 with a 5.10 ERA in his first full season, but that's a letdown considering his buildup as a superduper prospect.

DO IT AGAIN: SHANE MACK He hit .326 when no one was looking, but the light's on now that he is expected to afford Puckett's move to left.

A.L. STOLEN BASES

LAST YEAR'S BEST

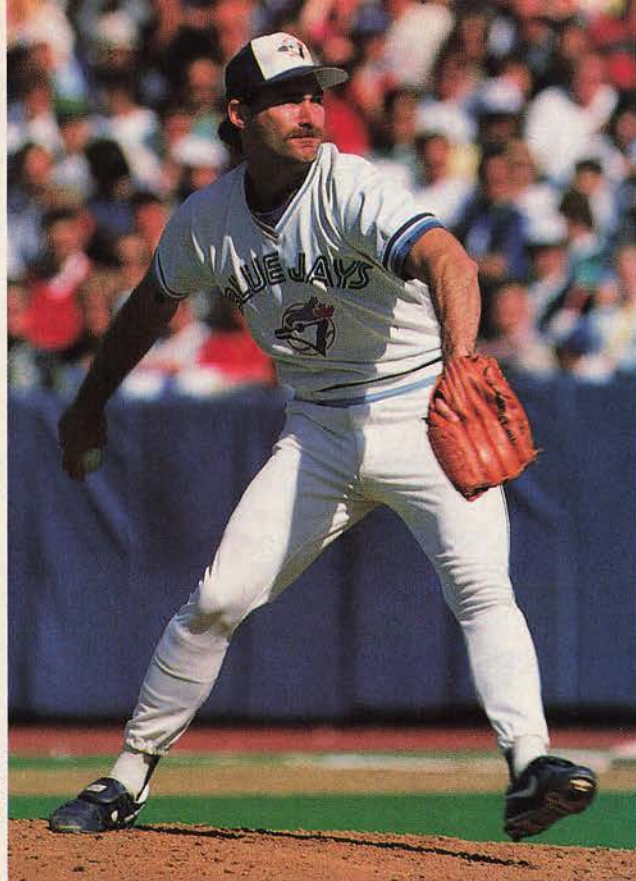
Milwaukee, 164. Someone *had* to lead this lumbering league in steals, right? But can you believe this: Milwaukee's team leader in steals was Gary Sheffield with a mere 25 heists—and that didn't even get him into the AL's top 10. The key to Milwaukee winning this department by 23 steals over Oakland was this: The Brewers had eight players in double figures in steals, including six guys with 15 or more. All Oakland had was three guys in double figures.

1991 PREDICTION

Chicago. Without Deer, the Brewers will run even more, but they won't approach White Sox country. With Tim Lincecum joining Ozzie Guillen and Lance Johnson to revive memories of the old days on the South Side (remember the Go Go White Sox?), Chicago is a lock. But right on its heels will be Oakland. Rickey will swipe his normal 60-70 bases, and Jose Canseco will chip in with about 40 more.

MICHAEL PONZINI/FOCUS ON SPORTS

BRYAN YABLONSKY



TORONTO BLUE JAYS

1 TOM HENKE Since the Blue Jays had a major-league-low six complete games last year, you realize how important Henke is. Toronto's ace closer has given up more big homers in recent years than ever before, but for the most part he has been a model of consistency for six years—a real accomplishment for a short man. Last year, he outdid himself by performing super-effectively (32 saves in 38 opportunities) without a smidgen of help from a left-handed set-up man, a situation that will change in 1991. Henke should go bonkers with the addition of free-agent left-handed reliever Ken Dayley.

2 JIMMY KEY Injuries have not only kept Key from becoming a big winner but have ripped away his staying power. While compiling a 13-7 record last year, he failed to complete any of his 27 starts. If only he could stay sound, he could easily win around 16 or 17 games and go back to what he once was: one of the AL's top lefties.

3 JOHN OLERUD At the All-Star break last season, Olerud led all rookies in homers, RBIs, walks, slugging and on-base percentage. Then he suddenly stopped hitting. Still, based on first impressions, the Jays were so eager to get him 500 at-bats, they shipped Fred McGriff to San Diego to clear the everyday job at first base for Olerud. He doesn't have McGriff's power, but he'll turn out to be a better all-around hitter.

4 KELLY GRUBER He's improved steadily since 1987, but last year he really took the lid off with 31 homers and 118 RBIs, easily surpassing his previous career highs of 18 homers and 81 RBIs. Frankly, with last year's offensive explosion and the decline of the other star third basemen, Gruber has become the best third baseman in the league.

5 DAVID WELLS Wells began 1990 as Toronto's top left-handed reliever, but he found his niche when the club moved him into the starting rotation. With a chance to strut his four-pitch stuff, Wells had an impressive 11-6 record and a 3.14 ERA. Scouts think he'll be an even bigger winner if he improves his stamina.

KEYSTONE: DAVE STIEB Talk all you want about how Stieb never wins 20 games. He still wins 16 to 17 games and pitches 200 innings every year. So give the guy a break. For years, he's been one of the toughest right-handed starters around, and

TOP LEFT: Key to the Blue Jays: Kelly Gruber is Toronto's primary power source and run producer.

TOP RIGHT: The Blue Jays' Keystone: Dave Stieb is always a cinch to win 17 games.

he peaked with 18 victories and his first no-hitter last season.

KEY NEWCOMERS: ROBERTO ALOMAR, JOE CARTER, DEVON WHITE Alomar immediately becomes the best second baseman in the division. Carter brings his calm, clean image into the traditionally chaotic Jays clubhouse and is a lock for 30 homers and 100 RBIs. Some say White has been the victim of too-high expectations. Others say he can do it all—but only when he wants to.

KEY ROOKIE: MARK WHITEN Whiten has been described as a Bo Jackson type. He hit .290 with 14 homers and 48 RBIs in 104 games at Triple-A last year and was named *Baseball America's* top prospect in the International League.

KEY COMEBACK: TODD STOTTELMYRE The Jays expect more from Stottlemlyre than his 13-17 record and 4.34 ERA of last year—especially since his average run support exceeded five runs per start. His major weakness is an inability to consistently snuff out left-handers.

DO IT AGAIN: PAT BORDERS The Jays' catcher hit .286 with 15 homers, both career highs.

BOSTON RED SOX

1 ROGER CLEMENS There isn't a thing Clemens can't do on the mound—except beat Oakland and argue with umpires. With a 21-6 record last season and a major-league-leading 1.93 ERA, Clemens literally carried the Sox to a division title. But keep an eye on his shoulder, which kept him out of action for most of last September. Otherwise expect him to win his usual 20-plus games.

2 TONY PENA Don't doubt Pena's impact on last year's pitching staff for a second. Not too many other catchers could have helped extract 13 wins out of Greg Harris, 10 out of Tom Bolton and eight from Dana Kiecker. Pena is a fiery presence behind the plate and handles pitchers with the best of them. He's not an offensive force, but so what. He adds so many other things that it doesn't matter.

3 ELLIS BURKS Burks is the only Red Sox player who combines power and speed. He's a 20-20 guy. Miscast as a cleanup man last year, he stopped running and screwed up his stroke trying to hit for more power. If there's anyone who'll benefit by Jack Clark's presence in the No. 4 slot, it's Burks.

4 JEFF REARDON At 35 and coming off back surgery, Reardon, the Sox's No. 1 closer, is a question. If his back doesn't hold up, it'll crack the weak Red Sox bullpen. Still, coming back from surgery last year to help seal the division showed Reardon has guts and heart.

5 JODY REED Boston's spunky second baseman had as many doubles last year as Darryl Strawberry, Bo Jackson and Tim Lincecum combined. His gap power and high on-base percentage make him a heckuva leadoff man, but he doesn't steal enough bases to rank among the best.

KEYSTONE: WADE BOGGS He battled injuries and overzealousness at the plate last year to fall 50 points below his lifetime average: a career-low .302. Heck, even in his worst of seasons, the guy can hit .300.

The Red Sox's Keystone: Wade Boggs can hit .300 with a blindfold.

KEY NEWCOMERS: JACK CLARK, MATT YOUNG, DANNY DARWIN Clark is just what the Red Sox need in the middle of the order: a right-handed thumper who could clear the Fenway Wall. If he averts major injury, he'll hit 35 homers and, with three potential .300 hitters in front of him, knock in 100-plus runs. Signing Young (career record 51-78) to a three-year, \$6.4 million contract was the outrage of the Winter Meetings. Boston is banking on pitching coach Bill Fischer teaching the 32-year-old left-hander to throw strikes for the first time in his life. Good luck. Darwin is a horse. He might win 15.

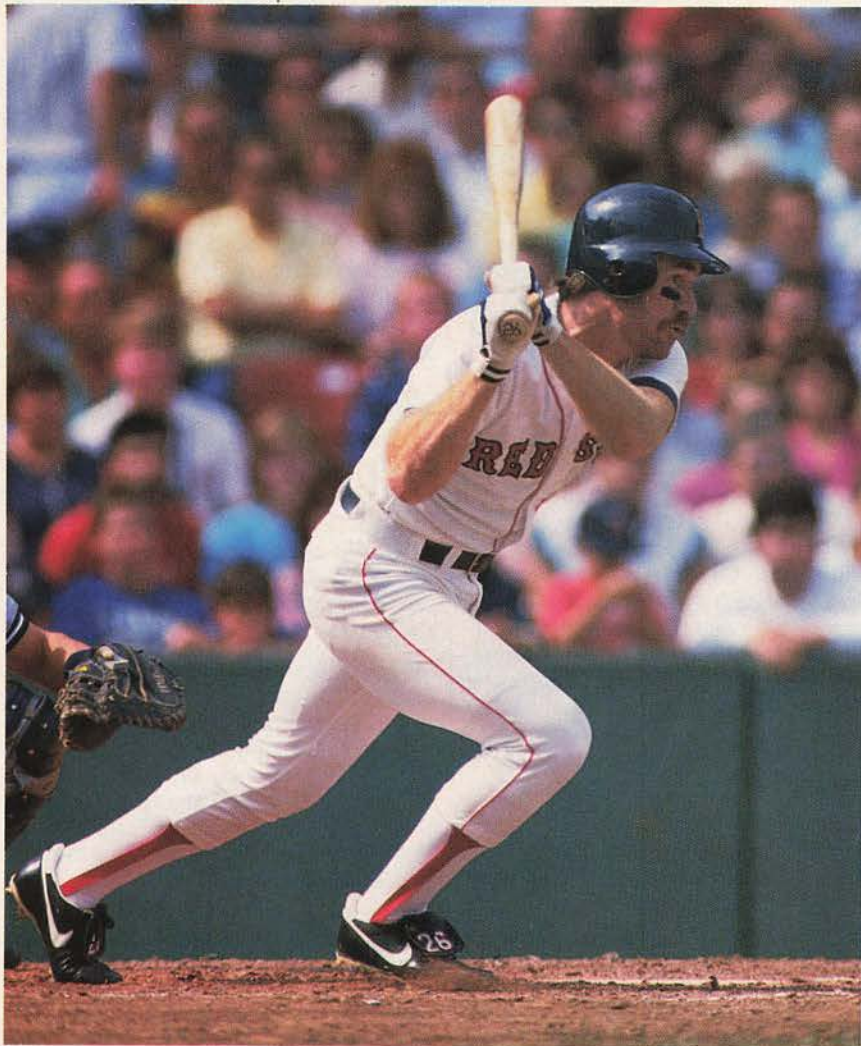
KEY ROOKIE: MO VAUGHN He's the prototype of a major-league first baseman: big, strong, powerful bat.

KEY COMEBACK: ROB MURPHY It'd be hard to be as bad as Murphy was in 1990: 0-6, 6.32 ERA. As the only legitimate left-hander out of the pen (unless Bolton is yanked from the rotation), the Sox have no choice other than to pitch him—and pray.

DO IT AGAIN: GREG HARRIS Harris was forced into the rotation after being slotted for middle relief. He found the corners with his breaking ball and won a career-high 13 games. Don't count on a repeat performance. He should return to mediocrity, winning 10 games.



Key to the Red Sox: Ellis Burks' combination of power and speed is a big boost to Boston.



BALTIMORE ORIOLES

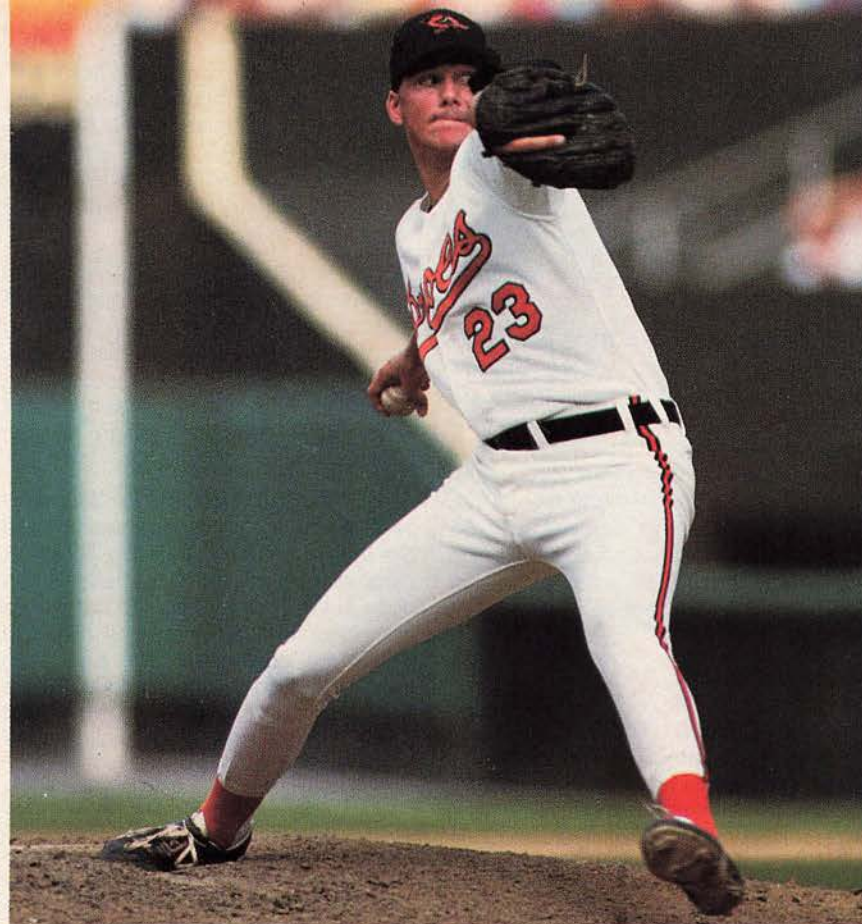
1 CAL RIPKEN JR. With his batting average dropping into the .250s in three of the last four seasons, including a career-low .250 last year, Ripken has slipped from Mr. Consistency to Mr. Slightly-Above-Average-And-Heading-Toward-Mediocrity. He started to look lost at the plate, a fate that seems only inevitable for a player who's held up a punchless lineup for so long and is chasing records (specifically, Lou Gehrig's consecutive-game playing streak). He was doomed for a burnout—until the arrival of Glenn Davis. Now Ripken can finally rid himself of the pressure of being the last-hope run producer. Maybe he'll take a day off every once in a while too.

2 BEN McDONALD It took McDonald one major-league start to become the team's ace. By his 15th, he was one of baseball's most dominant pitchers. Because of a pulled muscle and blisters on his pitching hand, Big Ben didn't debut until July, a wait that was worth it. He won his first five starts in the majors, and after a few rough outings, he finished at 8-5 with a 2.43 ERA. He did that without even tipping his hand. He threw, almost exclusively, fastballs and curves. This year, he's expected to come up with a dazzling change-up.

3 RANDY MILLIGAN A solid fielder and smart hitter, Milligan is now the DH with Davis around. Milligan was in the midst of a career year in '90 when a separated shoulder sidelined him for seven weeks. He ended up with a career-high 20 homers, but he won't go much higher until he learns to hit right-handers better.

4 MIKE DEVEREAUX The most potent bat in a depressingly impotent outfield, Devereaux is capable of much better numbers than last year's .240, 12 homers and 13 stolen bases. One season, he's going to bust loose with .300, 20 homers and 35 stolen bases. The Orioles are hoping it's this season.

5 JEFF ROBINSON Once considered to be a definite 15- to 17-game winner, Robinson has fallen to mediocrity because of arm problems. Acquired from Detroit for Mickey Tettleton in the off-season, Robinson shows flashes of brilliance at times—and fits of wildness at others. His 10



Key to the Orioles: Ben McDonald is a future Cy Young Award winner.

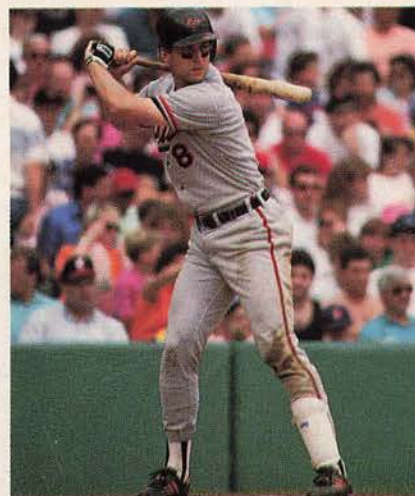
wins last year were somewhat misleading; in nine of those games, his teammates supported him with five or more runs.

KEYSTONE: GREGG OLSON Baltimore's No. 1 closer wasn't as unhittable as in his rookie year of '89. But he was smarter. He learned to shave his pitch total by retiring hitters earlier in the count. Don't be surprised if Olson supplants Dennis Eckersley as baseball's best closer.

KEY NEWCOMERS: GLENN DAVIS, DWIGHT EVANS The Orioles waited until mid-January to shore up their severe power shortage by acquiring Davis. It was better late than never. In addition to contributing 35-plus homers, Davis will make better hitters of everyone around him. The 39-year-old Evans will help if the O's are in the race.

KEY ROOKIE: LEO GOMEZ Gomez, Baltimore's best minor-league player last year (26 HRs, 97 RBIs at Triple-A Rochester), has a better-than-even shot at stealing the third-base job from Craig Worthington, providing he's not a complete klutz in the field. Gomez has a reputation for hitting in the clutch—and with considerable power. Don't be surprised if Baltimore sacrifices a piece of its solid defense to get his bat in the lineup.

KEY COMEBACKS: BOB MILACKI, JEFF BALLARD The Orioles' disappointing 1990 season could be traced to the dropoff



Key to the Orioles: Cal Ripken Jr. has to forget about Lou Gehrig's consecutive-game streak to be more potent.

of these two injured pitchers. They combined for a 32-20 record in '89, 7-19 in '90. Ballard, falling from 18-8 to 2-11, attempted to come back from an elbow problem too quickly and blew himself out. Milacki (14-12 to 5-8) suffered from throwing too many innings (a weighty 243) in his rookie season—a strained shoulder took away his control and velocity.

DO IT AGAIN: BILLY RIPKEN His average jumped 52 points (to a team-leading .291) above his lifetime mark.

CLEVELAND INDIANS

1 SANDY ALOMAR JR. Scouts never questioned his defense. But few thought he'd be more than just an average major-league hitter. Even the Indians didn't expect much, saying .250 and 50 RBIs would be fine. But Alomar exceeded everyone's expectations, hitting .290 with nine homers and 66 RBIs. In addition to winning AL Rookie of the Year honors, he established himself as one of the league's best catchers.

2 ALEX COLE Acquired from the Padres at the All-Star break, Cole first tore it up at Triple-A Colorado Springs, and then after a quick recall, he treated the big leagues like his personal Disneyland. For 63 games, he whizzed around the bases like the Tasmanian devil, stealing a team-high 40 bases and scoring 43 runs. Now he finds himself as the central figure of the offense. But you have to wonder why two clubs (the Cardinals and Padres) gave up on him without even a look-see at the major-league level.

3 GREG SWINDELL Swindell started a career-high 34 games and

stayed off the DL, but aside from that, he didn't do anything special. In fact, he was lucky to finish above .500. Deflecting a 4.40 ERA, a .288 opposition batting average and 245 hits allowed in 214 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings, he somehow managed to go 12-9.

4 TOM CANDIOTTI Despite all the young pitchers the Indians have touted in recent years, the 33-year-old knuckleballer is still the surest thing in the rotation. He's not an ace, but he wins 13 to 15 games every season and has logged 200-plus innings for five straight years.

5 CARLOS BAERGA His .380 average in the minor leagues prompted the Indians to give him a regular job at third base. He looked helpless at the plate at the start of the year, but after a demotion to the minors, he returned with more confidence and ended up leading major-league rookies in run production per game. He's a good fielder too, showing quick, solid movement around the bag.

KEYSTONE: DOUG JONES His one bad stretch last season (14 earned runs in 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings from August 28 to September 9) reminded everyone that he is human. He finished with 43 of Cleveland's 47 saves, blowing only eight opportunities along the way.

KEY NEWCOMER: ERIC KING The last thing the Indians needed was another fragile starter. King, acquired from the White Sox in the Cory Snyder deal, has been troubled by a sore shoulder for parts of the last



The Indians' Keystone: Doug Jones is one of baseball's premier closers.

two years and needs more than four days' rest between starts.

KEY ROOKIE: TURNER WARD For 14 September games, Ward made his mark, hitting .348 with 10 RBIs (including six in one game). At Triple-A, he hit .299 with six homers, 65 RBIs and 22 stolen bases. He's a kid with a lot of tools.

KEY COMEBACK: JESSE OROSCO Orosco needs to regain control of his slider, or the Indians are left without a dependable left-handed set-up man.

DO IT AGAIN: CHRIS JAMES A perennial overachiever, James hit .299 (ninth best in the AL) with 12 homers and 70 RBIs. His all-out hustling style also made him a fan favorite.

A.L. EARNED RUN AVERAGE

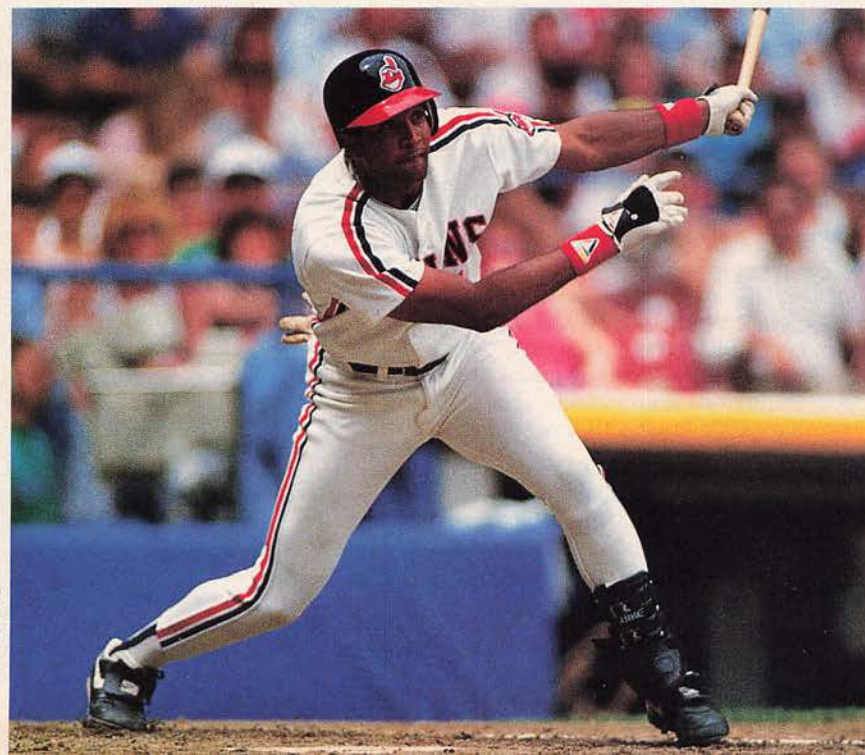
LAST YEAR'S BEST

Oakland, 3.18. With Dave Stewart, Bob (Cy Young) Welch and Dennis Eckersley, would you expect anything different? Oakland is such a great place to pitch, for goodness sakes, that guys who are no better than No. 4 or No. 5 starters (Storm Davis and Scott Sanderson) can become big winners in this town. Eric Show will be the next to discover that. The A's staff was so dominant that the ERA runner-up (Chicago) was way back at 3.61.

1991 PREDICTION

Oakland. Stewart will win his typical 20. Eckersley will save his typical 45. Welch will have another monster year but not as monstrous as 27-6. Mike Moore won't lose 15 games again. And if Storm Davis can win 19 games, as he did for the A's in '89, and if Sanderson can win 17, as he did for the A's in '90, then Show can certainly win 15 or so. No one can touch Oakland in this department.

Key to the Indians: Sandy Alomar Jr. is the best thing to hit Cleveland since the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.



TOM DIPACE



DETROIT TIGERS

1 CECIL FIELDER If not for Fielder, the Tigers would've finished two places lower in the standings last year. The one-time Blue Jays castoff returned from a year in Japanese exile with a boom: 51 homers, 132 RBIs and a second-place finish in the MVP voting. But it doesn't take a genius to predict at least a marginal tail-off in 1991. The reasons are obvious: Pitchers will work around him and know more about his weaknesses and, heck, hitting 50 dingers isn't something you do in back-to-back seasons unless you're Babe Ruth.

2 TRAVIS FRYMAN With good range, a strong arm and a potent bat, Fryman could be among the league's best all-around shortstops. But with that position occupied by Alan Trammell, Fryman needs to bide his time playing out of position at third base (Fryman never even played third before last season). Fryman's one drawback is that his intensity sometimes gets the best of him.

3 LOU WHITAKER Whitaker is the key to the Tigers' left-handed attack—which is cause for concern. While his power numbers (18 HRs, 60 RBIs) were decent last year, his .237

The Tigers' Keystone: Alan Trammell is one of baseball's best-hitting shortstops.

batting average was his lowest since 1980. Pitchers get him out now on pitches he used to own. If he floats at the start of 1991, don't be surprised if he's platooned with or replaced by Tony Phillips.

4 MIKE HENNEMAN Henneman is not a dominant enough closer for a team hoping to contend, but his durability comes in handy on a team that has starters who can't hack the late innings.

5 MICKEY TETTLETON Acquired from Baltimore for pitcher Jeff Robinson, the 30-year-old Tettleton has averaged 20 home runs since becoming a starting catcher in 1989. That number should soar once he gets acquainted with that bandbox in Detroit. That could also mean an extra five wins for the Tigers. For example, during those two years in Baltimore, the Orioles were 30-11 in games in which Tettleton homered. But there's one drawback to his game: He strikes out far too often.

KEYSTONE: ALAN TRAMMELL Playing through chronic back trouble to stay off the DL for the first time since '87, Trammell was one of the most improved hitters last year, his batting average rising 61 points from

.243 to .304. He's now hit .300 in six seasons, a feat accomplished by only five other shortstops—all Hall of Famers.

KEY NEWCOMER: ROB DEER Deer, who's hit 23 or more homers each of the last five seasons, should easily reach the upper 30s in Detroit's cozy park. He also fills a huge hole in right field, where 11 players were used last year.

KEY ROOKIE: MILT CUYLER Cuyler, a 22-year-old switch hitter who swings a mediocre stick from both sides, will likely start the season in center. Speedwise, you can't compare him to anybody. "A lot of people can run," manager Sparky Anderson says. "But this guy flat out flies."

KEY COMEBACK: LLOYD MOSEBY He could be washed up.

DO IT AGAIN: JERRY DON GLEATON His career has been marked by a series of recalls and demotions. Last year, however, he posted career highs in saves (13), games (57) and strikeouts (56).



Key to the Tigers: Cecil Fielder won't hit 51 homers again, but count on 40-plus.

OTTO GRUELE JR./ALLSPORT USA

KIRK SCHLEN

MILWAUKEE BREWERS

1 ROBIN YOUNT Yount was always the surest thing the Brewers had. Last season, however, he cracked in ways unimaginable, nose-diving from four consecutive .300 seasons with one of the all-time ugliest encores to an MVP season: .247 (down from .318), .228 with men in scoring position (down from .367) and 39 extra-base hits (down from 68). If Yount doesn't turn it around, the Brewers' attack will never get started.

2 PAUL MOLITOR If Molitor wasn't injured so often, he'd be heading toward the Hall of Fame. He's a consistent .300 hitter and an inspiring hustler. But his career reads like a hospital chart. Last year alone, he fractured a knuckle on his glove hand, broke the

Key to the Brewers: When Teddy Higuera is healthy, there's not a better lefty in the league.

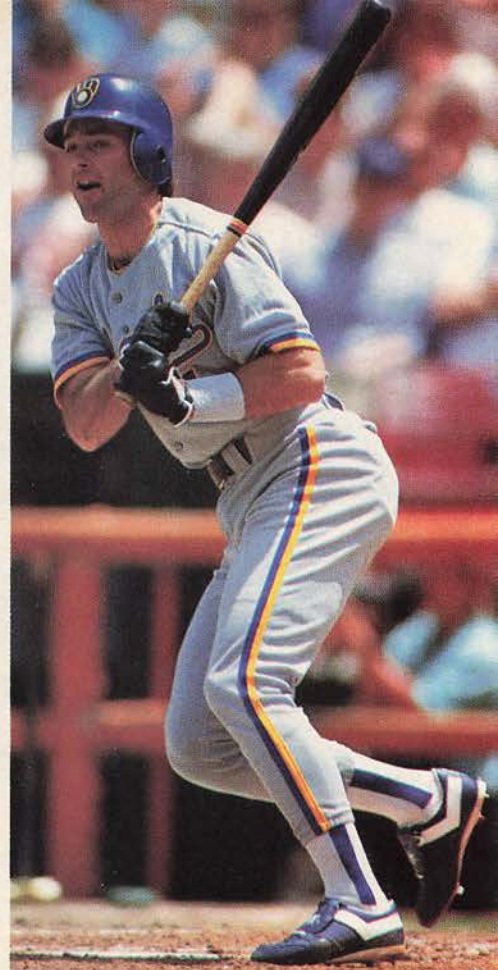
thumb of his throwing hand, tore a muscle in his forearm and underwent surgery on his shoulder. Now comes the new plan to protect him: shifting him from the demands of second base to the low-profile confines of first.

3 TEDDY HIGUERA "Teddy's our Dave Stewart," says manager Tom Trebelhorn. To some extent, that's true. But *what a stretch*. Admittedly, Higuera is a tough pitcher—and maybe the best left-hander in the league when he's healthy. But, lately, that isn't often enough. Last year, done in by a bruised knee and groin pulls, he missed too many turns and won only 11 games. Stewart hits that mark at midseason.

4 CHRIS BOSIO Why is Bosio still part of the rotation after a 4-9 season? Because the Brewers are convinced that the Bosio of 1989 (15-10, 2.95 ERA) is the real Bosio. Scouts, however, say Bosio relies too much on his breaking ball and could use another pitch.

5 GREG VAUGHN He hit 17 homers last year, the second-highest total for an AL rookie, but also came up with a disturbing 1-for-46 slump that sent him to the bench. Milwaukee needs more consistency from him.

KEYSTONE: GARY SHEFFIELD OK, so he's had attitude problems. He's overcome them. He's coming off a brilliant offensive year and is an emerging superstar.



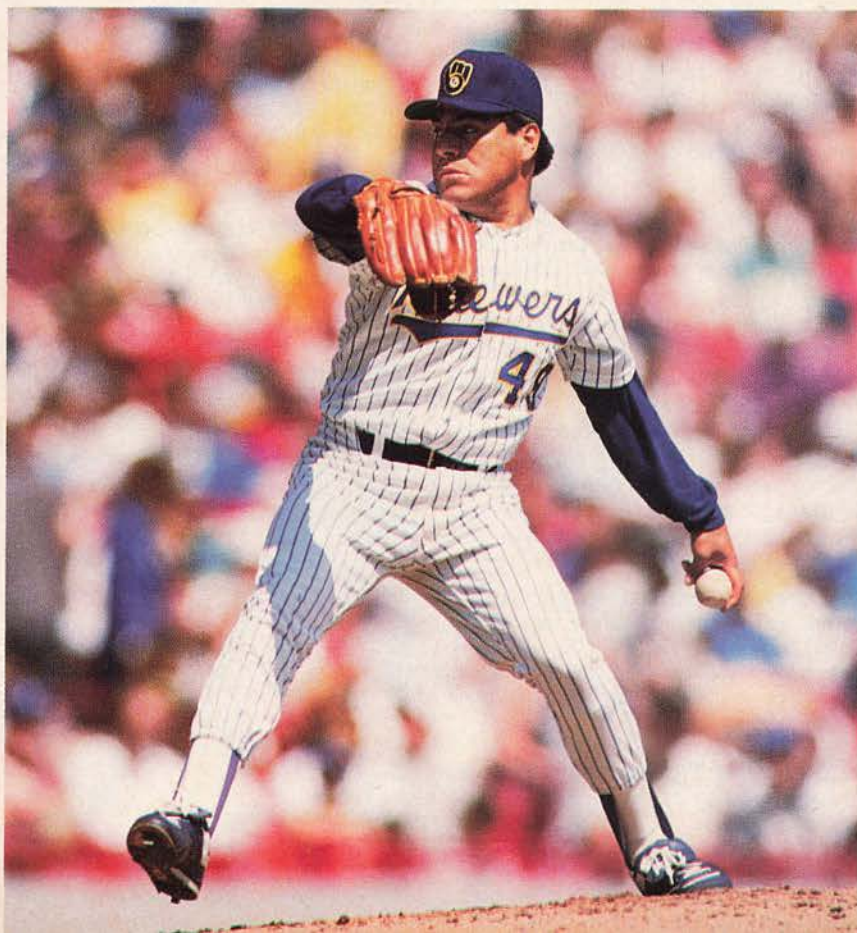
Key to the Brewers: Paul Molitor must remain injury-free for Milwaukee to be a factor in the race.

KEY NEWCOMER: FRANKLIN STUBBS Signing Stubbs merely covered up the loss of free-agent flier Rob Deer. Stubbs, who'll replace Deer in right field, compares this way: more range but less arm in the field, more contact but less power at the plate. Less arm is the critical factor. Stubbs recorded only one outfield assist last year, compared with Deer's 14, which tied him for the second-highest total among major-league outfielders.

KEY ROOKIE: KEVIN BROWN Acquired from the Mets last September, the left-hander went 10-6 with a 3.55 ERA at Triple-A, then 1-1, 2.57 with the Brewers. He'll likely be the No. 5 starter or a long reliever.

KEY COMEBACK: DAN PLESAC Plesac used to frighten hitters. Last year, he frightened his teammates. He blew 10 of 34 save opportunities, opponents hit .257 against him (up from .213 in '89), and his ERA (4.43) rose above 3.00 for first time. Milwaukee cannot survive another ineffective season from Plesac.

DO IT AGAIN: RON ROBINSON Coming over from the Reds in a June trade, Robinson obliterated his reputation as a six-inning, bum-elbowed pitcher, leading the team in victories (12-5), complete games (seven) and ERA (2.91).



NEW YORK YANKEES

1TIM LEARY The Yankees invested nearly \$6 million in the wild hope that Leary will suddenly turn into an ace. One look at his track record makes one leery. He's had only one winning year in a nine-year career and was 9-19 in 1990. Of course, Leary cites perennially poor run support as his defense. He may have a case, but one gets the feeling he would find a way to lose no matter how many runs he received.

2MIKE WITT The Yankees wooed Witt, their intended No. 3 starter, with millions of free-agent dollars, forgetting—or choosing to ignore—that he collapsed with elbow problems last year and hasn't had a winning season since 1987. The Yankees are banking on 15 W's. They're asking a bit too much.

3LEE GUETTERMAN With Dave Righetti taking his heart to San Francisco, Guetterman, a low-key left-handed set-up man, moves up to No. 1 closer with only 15 career saves behind him. Does he have the personality and the stuff to be the team's one and only? It's doubtful.

4STEVE SAX Sax was the Yankees' best player two years ago, hitting .315 and stealing 43 bases. Last year, his fire finally burnt out from all the losing, and he drifted to .260. Maybe his new four-year, \$12.4 million contract extension will revive him.

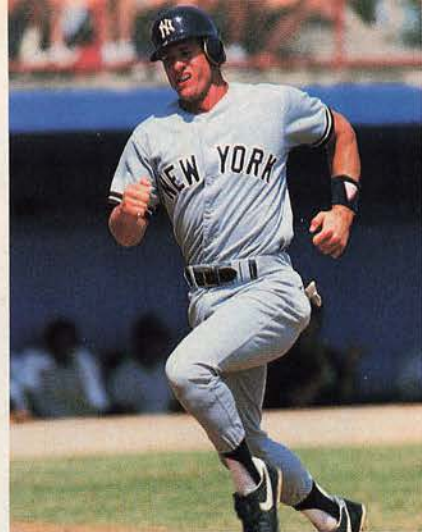
5ROBERTO KELLY Kelly has a world of talent but a deserted island of smarts. If only he were more patient, he could hit an easy .300 and get on base nearly 40 percent of the time. As it is, he struck out 148 times last year and walked only 33 times.

KEYSTONE: ALVARO ESPINOZA It's pretty sad when you have to dig for a keystone player, and even sadder when you wind up listing someone with a .224 average. But defense is important—especially at shortstop—and Espinoza is one of the steadiest in baseball.

KEY NEWCOMERS: SCOTT SANDERSON, STEVE FARR Could someone explain why a team with no chance of winning signed two 34-year-old pitchers to contracts? Granted, Sanderson won a career-high 17 games last year, but that was with the A's. Farr is versatile and has decent stuff, but don't expect him to produce anything near last year's career year (13-7, 1.98 ERA).

KEY ROOKIE: HENSLEY MEULENS Once buried by Steinbrenner for making some bad plays at third base, Meulens has re-emerged. "Bam Bam" hit 26 homers and

Key to the Yankees: Roberto Kelly must be more patient so that he can hit .300.



Key to the Yankees: Steve Sax is one of the few all-stars left on the club.

had 96 RBIs at Triple-A Columbus last year. If he has considerable potential on offense, he has next to none on defense, making an adventure of even the most routine of plays.

KEY COMEBACK: DON MATTINGLY Obviously. Last year, Mattingly's back problem not only caused him to miss 60 games but caused him to have his worst season (.256, five HRs, 42 RBIs). The Yankees must protect Mattingly from himself, insisting he sit out 20 times a year and DH another 30. If he's the franchise, you better do everything to keep him around.

DO IT AGAIN: KEVIN MAAS Maas reached 10, 13 and 15 homers faster than anyone in history—and did it as a *rookie*. He finished with 21 HRs—the most by an AL rookie—in 254 at-bats and displayed an unusually good eye for a young power man. He needs to guard against the temptation to pull every pitch and hit everything into the stands. ★

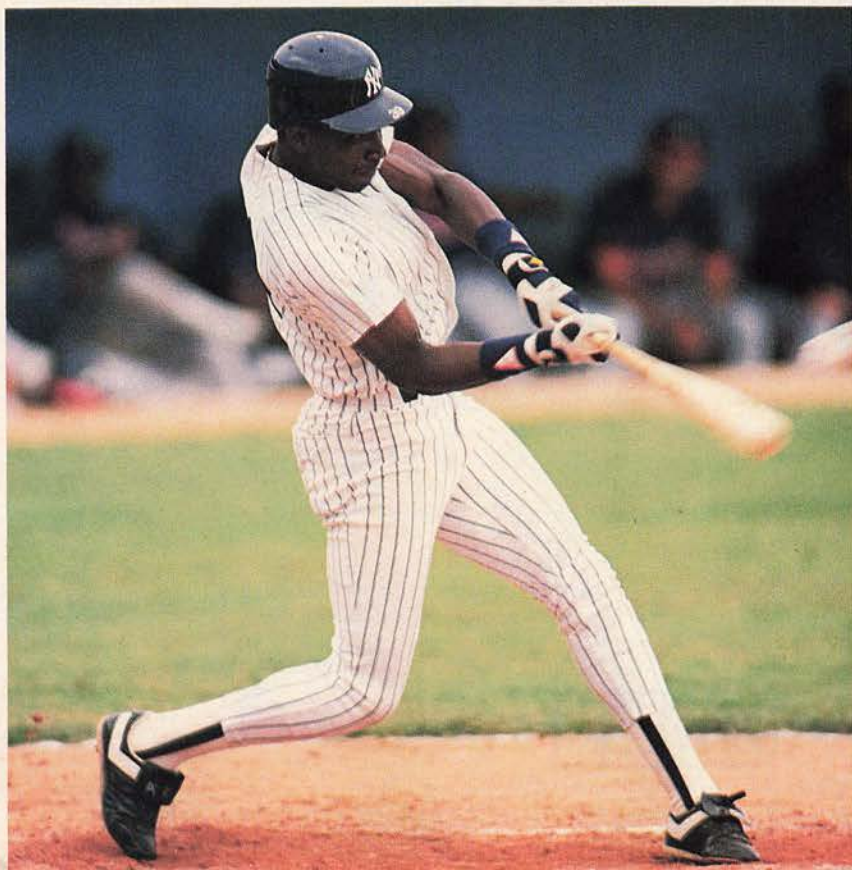
A.L. HOME RUNS

LAST YEAR'S BEST

Detroit, 172. Obviously, Cecil Fielder and his 51 homers made the difference—especially when you consider that the Tigers' runner-up in homers was Lou Whitaker, who had a mere 18. Fielder, only the 11th major-leaguer in history to slug 50 homers, single-handedly prevented Toronto from winning the dinger derby. The difference between the clubs was five homers.

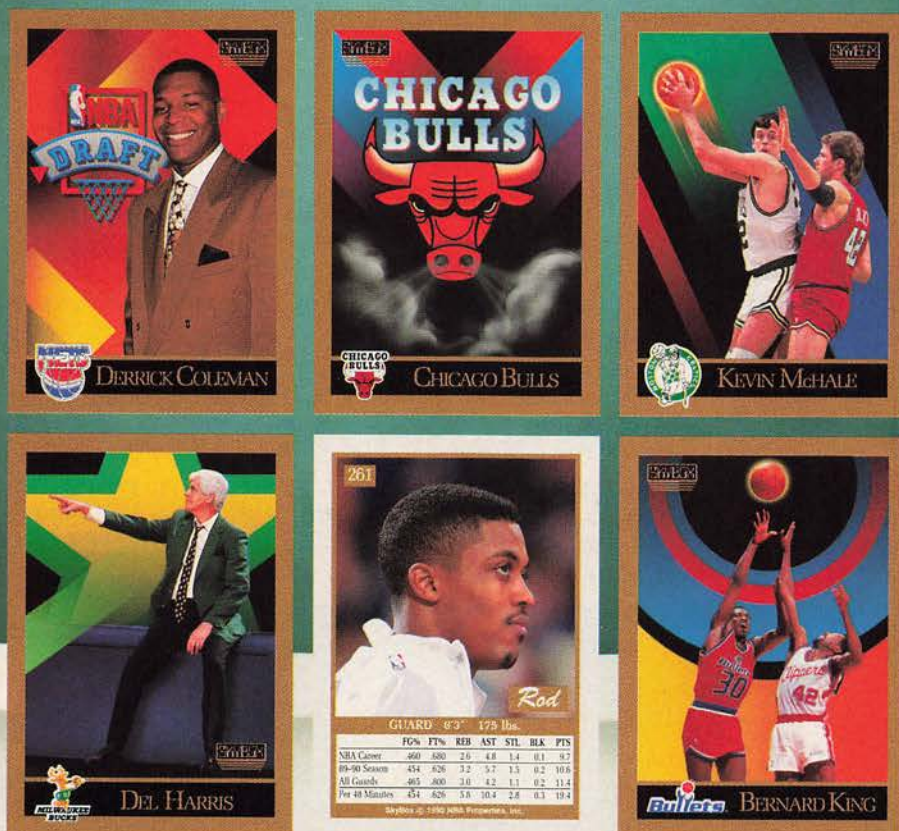
1991 PREDICTION

Detroit. Fielder won't hit 51 homers again, but newcomer Rob Deer, the former Milwaukee masher, will easily compensate for the drop-off. Deer, signed by Detroit as a free agent, hit 27 homers last year and has averaged 21 in seven seasons. Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire, Harold Baines and Rickey Henderson will keep Oakland close in this race.



TOM D'PACE

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THE SPORT NBA PLAYOFF PREVIEW

WHEN THEY'RE
FINISHED, PORTLAND
WILL EMERGE TO
BEAT BOSTON IN THE
FINALS/ By Bob Ryan

Each night, just before the honchos who operate the likes of Portland, Los Angeles (the Lakers, not the other guys), Phoenix, San Antonio and Utah close their eyes and head to the land of Nod, they whisper a little prayer.

"Please, Lord, let me wake up and discover we've been moved to the Atlantic Division."

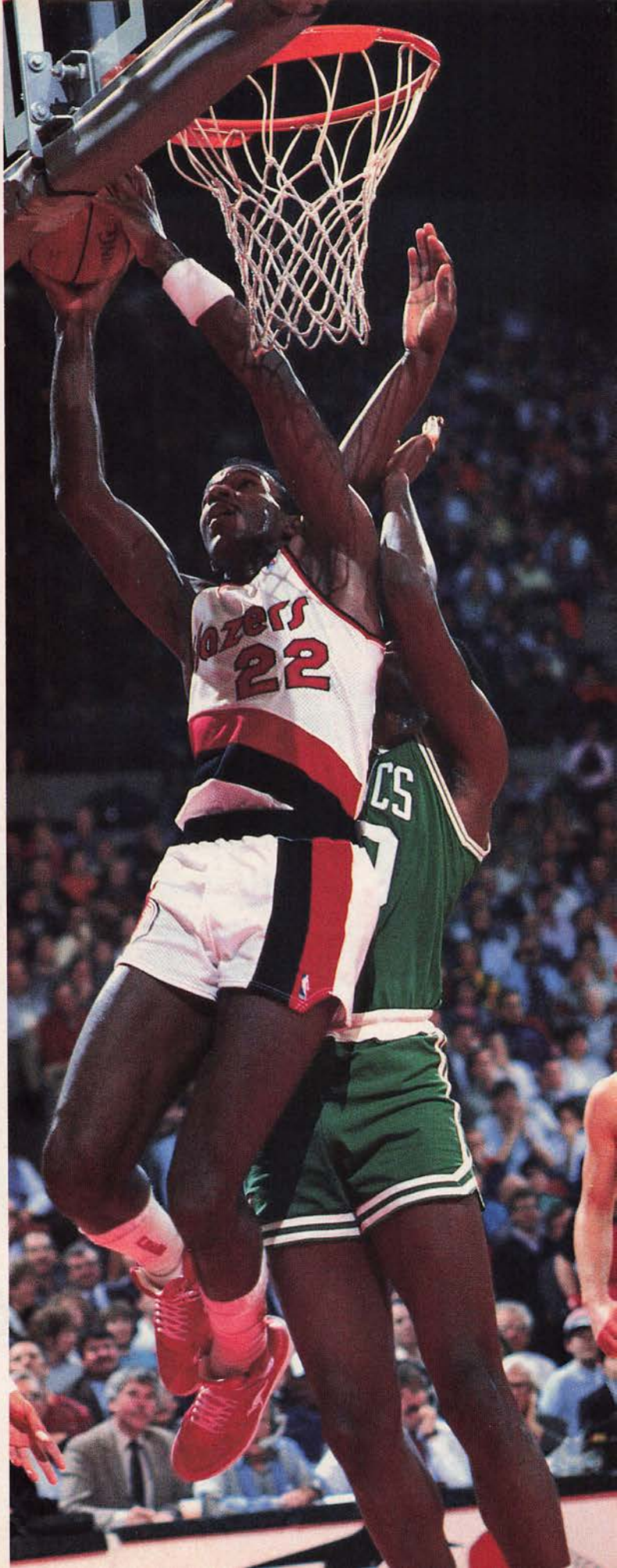
Come playoff time, the West will be the scene of battles, the magnitude of which has seldom been seen. The aforementioned five, plus Golden State, Seattle and probably Houston (with an avenging Akeem Olajuwon), will square off for weeks of very high-level basketball. Whoever emerges from the Western Conference at the end of May will have accomplished more than most NBA champions did in the league's first 35 years of existence.

The East may or may not provide a viable opponent. A healthy Detroit would be at least a dangerous foe and perhaps even a betting favorite to win its third straight title. That requires a ready-to-go Isiah Thomas, and who can count on that? With no Zeke, or a frustrated Zeke, or a cranky Zeke, the Pistons cannot win a championship series against the kind of competition the West will provide.

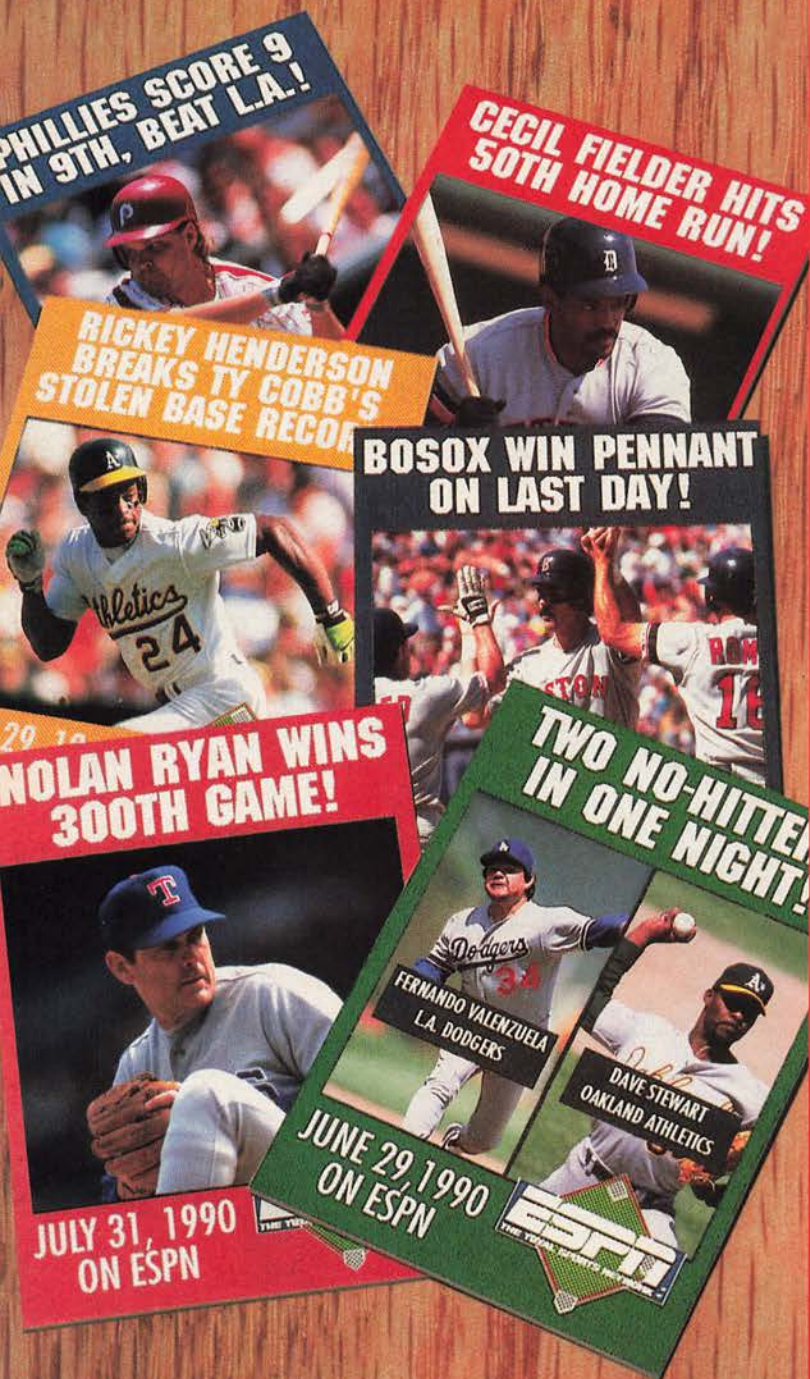
Boston? The Celtics likewise need a full cast of characters, starting with a fully functioning Larry Bird. When Larry went out for the month of January with his bad back, the Celtics went from transcendental to mortal.

Clyde Drexler and the Blazers' superior depth and athleticism will be too much for the Celtics in the finals; besides, it's Portland's year.

BRAIN DRAKE/SPORTSCHROME



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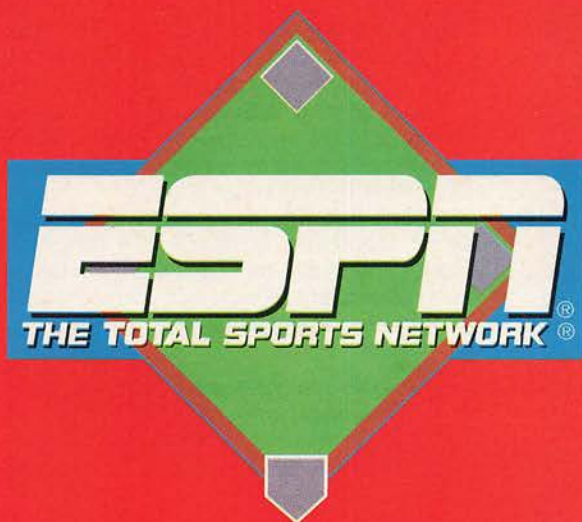
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As for Chicago, will the playoffs once again be a spring production of *Michael and the Seven Dwarfs*?

Any way you analyze it, the West is deeper, nastier, more competitive and more exciting, as any Western Conference coach, general manager, player personnel director or season-ticket holder will gladly tell you.

So with the help of a prominent and neutral Eastern Conference executive (i.e., one whose team has as much chance of reaching the 1991 championship series as Roseanne Barr does of being invited to sing the anthem for it) and that of an equally prominent and similarly neutral Western Conference executive—hereupon to be referred to as Mr. Eastern Conference and Mr. Western Conference—we present the early line on the 1991 NBA playoffs.

EASTERN CONFERENCE

This much we know: It's a three-team race. Don't be looking for the Eastern equivalent of a 1981 Houston-type team to still be playing ball come June. The East may be wounded, but it's not *that* wounded.

1. BOSTON Two games after losing Bird to his bad back, the Celtics were

29-5. They were pulling off a rare parlay by leading the league in both field-goal percentage and defense against the field goal. Their running game had returned. The swagger was back. The Boston Garden was once again a torture chamber for terrified foes.

"Chris Ford has done a sensational job [as coach]," says Mr. Eastern Conference. "He correctly perceived the way Boston had to play, and then he stuck with it. There is always a temptation when you're a young coach to stick with the traditional, and he wouldn't do that."

But without Bird, the Celtics were inconsistent and vulnerable. With him, the young players have guidance, and fellow future Hall of Famers Robert Parish and Kevin McHale have security.

"What the old players needed were young legs," says Mr. Eastern Conference. "With Brian Shaw, Dee Brown, Kevin Gamble and Reggie Lewis, they have the legs. They're very flexible now, and in the playoffs, they have the capacity to go back to their old ways."

A major Celtics drawback is their lack of quality depth, and that's where Derek Smith comes in. If the patch-up swingman can be restored to health, the Celtics will have alleviated their depth problem.

2. DETROIT The Pistons are still the best defensive team in the league. They still have a firm belief in a total system of offense and defense, since said belief has made them two-time champions. They still have great coaching, and they still have excellent depth.

But if they don't have Isiah and his balky right wrist for the long haul, forget the title. Probably even forget the East. Boston now has what it takes to beat Detroit with Isiah, and would surely beat Detroit without him.

"They have the requisite toughness and experience to reach the conference finals without Isiah," says Mr. East. "But that's as far as I can see them getting."

3. CHICAGO Each year, the Bulls get a little better. But the truth is, their essence hasn't changed. They are built around Michael Jordan, a man so gifted that he may be *too* talented for his—and his team's—own good. As Mr. Eastern Conference says, "I think he may not only intimidate the other team but also his own teammates."

Prime-of-life Magic Johnson and prime-of-life Larry Bird knew how to bring out the best in both themselves and their teammates. Michael can always accomplish the former, but only occasionally does he tack on the sec-

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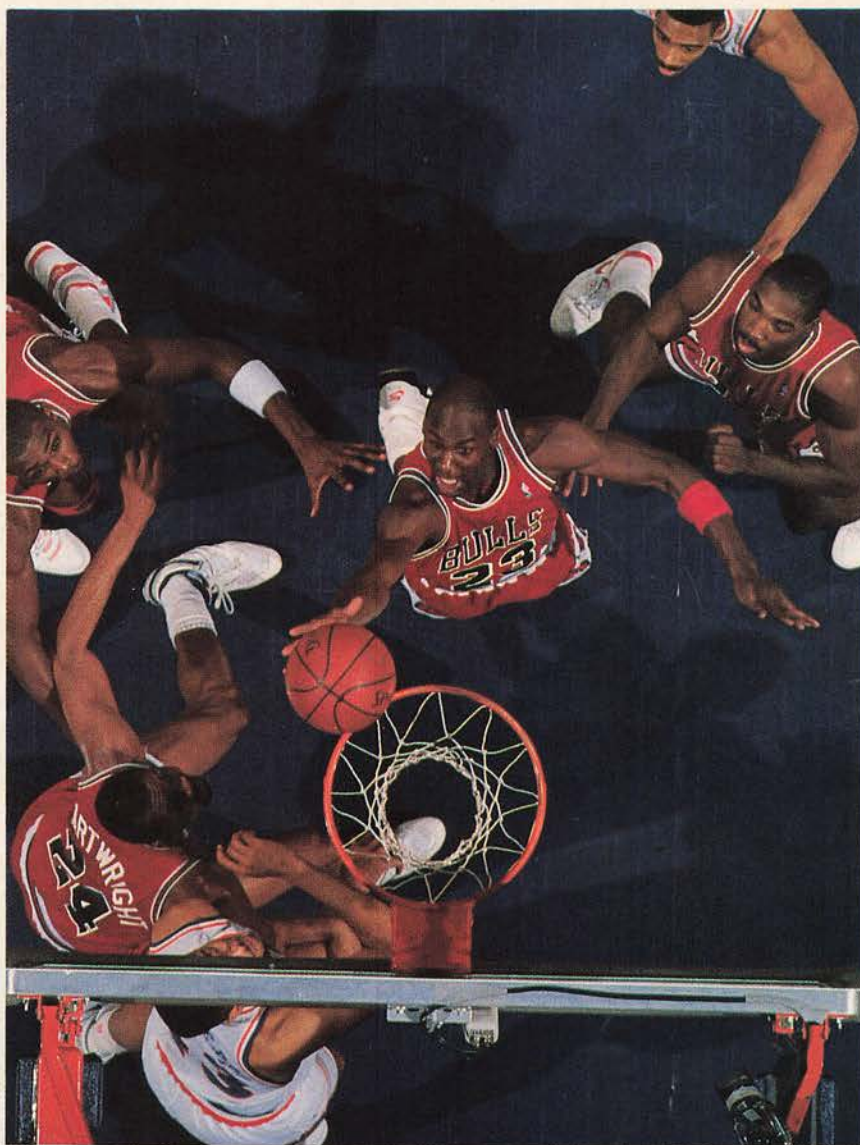
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Michael Jordan and the Seven Dwarfs
will reach a point where *He* can no
longer do it all himself.

ond part. Each year, the Bulls reach a
point where Michael can no longer do it
all himself.

"Jordan is a phenomenal force, and
I don't like betting against him," says
Mr. Eastern Conference. "But they still
rely on him, and you can't say he's
changed until they can win a big playoff
game with him on the periphery. He is
not yet ready to assume a different
role."

4. THE REST Philadelphia can win a
series because of Charles Barkley. Dit-
to Atlanta with Dominique Wilkins.
That's it.

WESTERN CONFERENCE

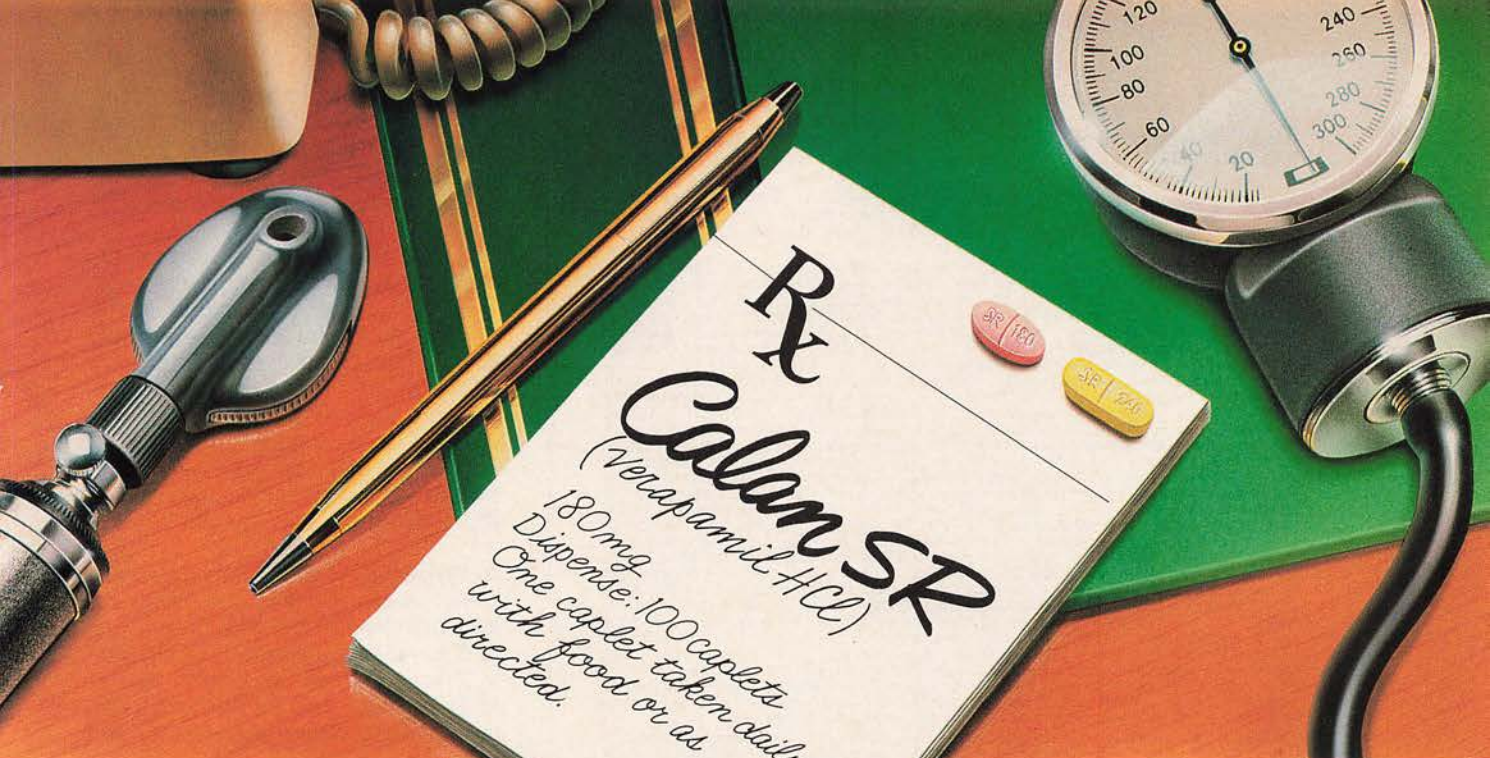
1. PORTLAND The record isn't illusory.

"In the last two years," says Mr.
Western Conference, "Portland has
made all the right moves. Buck Wil-
liams was ideal. Danny Ainge is the
right guy. Now they've added Walter
Davis. They've got depth, shooting,
and they've really rallied around the
coach. Their defense may not be clas-
sic, but it's extraordinarily *athletic*."

"The Trail Blazers are so good and
deep, they may even be able to with-
stand an injury and still win. Surely,
Rick Adelman would hate to lose Clyde
Drexler or Terry Porter, but with Ainge
and Davis around, he might survive."

He's right, our Mr. W. Last year, the
Blazers had no answer to Vinnie John-
son, no starter-on-the-bench. Now they
have two. Three, maybe, if you count
the improved Cliff Robinson.

2. LOS ANGELES Look at it this way:
The Lakers won 63 games last year
and then dumped Orlando Woolridge in
favor of Sam Perkins. Even if you think
a traffic light is more energetic than
Sam Perkins, he does know how to



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180 mg 240 mg

Contraindications: Severe LV dysfunction (see *Warnings*), hypotension (systolic pressure < 90 mm Hg) or cardiogenic shock, sick sinus syndrome (if no pacemaker is present), 2nd- or 3rd-degree AV block (if no pacemaker is present), atrial flutter/fibrillation with an accessory bypass tract (eg, WPW or LGL syndromes), hypersensitivity to verapamil.

Warnings: **Heart failure:** Verapamil has a negative inotropic effect. In clinical experience with 4,954 patients, 87 (1.8%) developed congestive heart failure or pulmonary edema. Verapamil should be avoided in patients with severe LV dysfunction (eg, ejection fraction < 30%) or moderate to severe symptoms of cardiac failure and in patients with any degree of ventricular dysfunction if they are receiving a beta-blocker (see *Drug Interactions*). Control mild heart failure with optimum digitalization and/or diuretics before Calan SR is used. **(Note interactions with digoxin under Precautions.)** **Hypotension:** Verapamil may occasionally produce hypotension. **Elevated liver enzymes:** Elevations of transaminases with and without concomitant elevations in alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin have been reported. Such elevations have sometimes been transient and may disappear even in the face of continued verapamil treatment. Several cases of hepatocellular injury related to verapamil have been proven by rechallenge; half of these had clinical symptoms (malaise, fever, and/or right upper quadrant pain) in addition to elevation of SGOT, SGPT, and alkaline phosphatase. Periodic monitoring of liver function in patients on verapamil is prudent. **Accessory bypass tract (Wolff-Parkinson-White or Lown-Ganong-Levine):** Some patients with paroxysmal and/or chronic atrial flutter/fibrillation and an accessory AV pathway (eg, WPW or LGL syndromes) have developed an increased antegrade conduction across the accessory pathway bypassing the AV node, producing a very rapid ventricular response or ventricular fibrillation after receiving I.V. verapamil (or digitalis). Because of this risk, oral verapamil is contraindicated in such patients (see *Contraindications*). Treatment is usually DC-cardioversion. Cardioversion has been used safely and effectively after oral Calan. **Atrioventricular block:** The effect of verapamil on AV conduction and the SA node may cause asymptomatic first-degree AV block and transient bradycardia, sometimes accompanied by nodal escape rhythms. PR-interval prolongation is correlated with verapamil plasma concentrations, especially during the early titration phase of therapy. AV block may occur (2nd- and 3rd-degree, 0.8%). Development of marked 1st-degree block or progression to 2nd- or 3rd-degree block requires reduction in dosage or, rarely, discontinuation and institution of appropriate therapy. **Patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (IHSS):** In 120 patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (most of them refractory or intolerant to propranolol) who received therapy with verapamil at doses up to 720 mg/day, a variety of serious adverse effects was seen. Three patients died in pulmonary edema; all had severe left ventricular outflow obstruction and a past history of left ventricular dysfunction. Eight other patients had pulmonary edema and/or severe hypotension; abnormally high (> 20 mm Hg) pulmonary wedge pressure and a marked left ventricular outflow obstruction were present in most of these patients. Concomitant administration of quinidine (see *Drug Interactions*) preceded the severe hypotension in 3 of the 8 patients (2 of whom developed pulmonary edema). Sinus bradycardia occurred in 11% of the patients, 2nd-degree AV block in 4%, and sinus arrest in 2%.

Precautions: **Use in patients with impaired hepatic function:** Verapamil should be given cautiously to patients with impaired hepatic function (in severe dysfunction use about 30% of the normal dose) and patients should be monitored for abnormal prolongation of the PR interval or other signs of overdosage (see *Overdosage*). **Use in patients with attenuated (decreased) neuromuscular transmission:** Verapamil may decrease neuromuscular transmission in patients with Duchenne's muscular dystrophy and may prolong recovery from the neuromuscular blocking agent vecuronium. It may be necessary to decrease verapamil dosage in patients with attenuated neuromuscular transmission. **Use in patients with impaired renal function:** About 70% of an administered dose of verapamil is excreted as metabolites in the urine. Verapamil is not removed by hemodialysis. Until further data are available, verapamil should be administered cautiously to patients with impaired renal function. These patients should be carefully monitored for abnormal prolongation of the PR interval or other signs of overdosage (see *Overdosage*). **Drug interactions:** Combined therapy with beta-adrenergic blockers and verapamil may result in additive negative effects on heart rate, atrioventricular conduction, and/or cardiac contractility. The combination of sustained-release verapamil and beta-adrenergic blocking agents has not been studied. However, there have been reports of excessive bradycardia and AV block, including complete heart block. For hypertensive patients, the risks of such combined therapy may outweigh the benefits. The combination should be used only with caution and close monitoring. Asymptomatic bradycardia (36 beats/min) with a wandering atrial pacemaker has been observed in a patient receiving concomitant timolol (a beta-adrenergic blocker) eyedrops and oral verapamil. A decrease in metoprolol clearance has been observed when verapamil and metoprolol were administered together. A similar effect has not been seen when verapamil and atenolol were given together. Chronic verapamil treatment can increase serum digoxin levels by 50% to 75% during the first week of therapy, which can result in digitalis toxicity. In patients with hepatic cirrhosis, verapamil may reduce total body clearance and extrarenal clearance of digitoxin by 27% and 29%, respectively. The digitoxin dose should be reduced when verapamil is given, and the patient carefully monitored. Verapamil administered concomitantly with oral antihypertensive agents (eg, vasodilators, angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, diuretics, beta-blockers) will usually have an additive effect on lowering blood pressure. Patients receiving these combinations should be appropriately monitored. Concomitant use of agents that attenuate alpha-adrenergic function with verapamil may result in a reduction in blood pressure that is excessive in some patients. Such an effect was observed in one study following the concomitant administration of verapamil and prazosin. Disopyramide should not be given within 48 hours before or 24 hours after verapamil administration. Concomitant use of flecainide and verapamil may have additive effects on myocardial contractility, AV conduction, and repolarization. Combined verapamil and quinidine therapy in patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy should be avoided, since significant hypotension may result. Verapamil has been given concomitantly with short- and long-acting nitrates without any undesirable drug interactions. The interaction between cimetidine and chronically administered verapamil has not been studied. Variable results on clearance have been obtained in acute studies of healthy volunteers; clearance of verapamil was either reduced or unchanged. Concomitant use of lithium and verapamil may result in a lowering of serum lithium levels or increased sensitivity to lithium. Patients receiving both drugs must be monitored carefully. Verapamil may increase carbamazepine concentrations during combined use. This may produce carbamazepine side effects such as diplopia, headache, ataxia, or dizziness. Rifampin may markedly reduce verapamil bioavailability. Phenobarbital may increase verapamil clearance. Verapamil may increase serum levels of cyclosporin. Concomitant use of inhalation anesthetics and calcium antagonists needs careful titration to avoid excessive cardiovascular depression. Verapamil may potentiate the activity of neuromuscular blocking agents (curare-like and depolarizing); dosage reduction may be required. An 18-month toxicity study in rats, at a low multiple (6-fold) of the maximum recommended human dose, and not the maximum tolerated dose, did not suggest a tumorigenic potential. There was no evidence of a carcinogenic potential of verapamil administered in the diet of rats for two years at doses of 10, 35, and 120 mg/kg/day or approximately 1, 3.5, and 12 times, respectively, the maximum recommended human daily dose (480 mg/kg/day or 9.6 mg/kg/day). Studies in female rats at daily dietary doses up to 5.5 times (55 mg/kg/day) the maximum recommended human dose did not show impaired fertility. Effects on male fertility have not been determined. Pregnancy Category C. There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. This drug should be used during pregnancy, labor, and delivery only if clearly needed. Verapamil is excreted in breast milk; therefore, nursing should be discontinued during verapamil use. Safety and efficacy of Calan SR in children below the age of 18 years have not been established. In chronic animal toxicology studies verapamil caused lenticular and/or suture line changes at 30 mg/kg/day or greater, and frank cataracts at 62.5 mg/kg/day or greater in the beagle dog but not in the rat. Development of cataracts due to verapamil has not been reported in man.

Adverse Reactions: See *Warnings* for discussion of heart failure, hypotension, elevated liver enzymes, AV block, and rapid ventricular response. Constipation (7.3%), dizziness (3.3%), nausea (2.7%), hypotension (2.5%), headache (2.2%), edema (1.9%), CHF and pulmonary edema (1.8%), fatigue (1.7%), dyspnea (1.4%), bradycardia: HR < 50/min (1.4%), AV block: total 1°, 2°, 3° (1.2%), 2° and 3° (0.8%), rash (1.2%), flushing (0.6%), elevated liver enzymes (see *Warnings*). The following reactions, reported in < 1.0% of patients, occurred under conditions where a causal relationship is uncertain: angina pectoris, atrioventricular dissociation, chest pain, claudication, myocardial infarction, palpitations, purpura (vasculitis), syncope, diarrhea, dry mouth, gastrointestinal distress, gingival hyperplasia, ecchymosis or bruising, cerebrovascular accident, confusion, equilibrium disorders, insomnia, muscle cramps, paresthesia, psychotic symptoms, shakiness, somnolence, arthralgia and rash, exanthema, hair loss, hyperkeratosis, macules, sweating, urticaria, Stevens-Johnson syndrome, erythema multiforme, blurred vision, gynecomastia, increased urination, spotty menstruation, impotence. The frequency of cardiovascular adverse reactions that require therapy is rare; hence, experience with their treatment is limited. Whenever severe hypotension or complete AV block occurs following oral administration of verapamil, the appropriate emergency measures should be applied immediately; eg, intravenously administered norepinephrine bitartrate, atropine sulfate, isoproterenol HCl (all in the usual doses), or calcium gluconate (10% solution). In patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (IHSS), alpha-adrenergic agents (phenylephrine HCl, metaraminol bitartrate, or methoxamine HCl) should be used to maintain blood pressure, and isoproterenol and norepinephrine should be avoided. If further support is necessary, dopamine HCl or dobutamine HCl may be administered. Actual treatment and dosage should depend on the severity of the clinical situation and the judgment and experience of the treating physician.

Overdosage: Treatment of overdosage should be supportive. Beta-adrenergic stimulation or parenteral administration of calcium solutions may increase calcium ion flux across the slow channel and have been used effectively in treatment of deliberate overdosage with verapamil. Verapamil cannot be removed by hemodialysis. Clinically significant hypotensive reactions or fixed high-degree AV block should be treated with vasopressor agents or cardiac pacing, respectively. Asystole should be handled by the usual measures, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

play. And he has improved that team.

But Perkins, Worthy, Scott, Divac, Green and Thompson aside, there is one reason everybody must take the Lakers seriously in the here and now, and that's No. 32.

"Magic Johnson is the consummate player," says Mr. Eastern Conference. "Watch that team. In the fourth quarter of close games, he leads to every basket. He passes for it, he creates it, or he makes it."

"He's the mix-master," says Mr. Western Conference in agreement.

This, we can assume, is the team NBC is rooting for in its inaugural season of televising the playoffs.

3. PHOENIX As usual, Jerry Colangelo never sleeps. He has completely rebuilt this team in the last three years, and he never considers the job done.

This year, he has added Xavier McDaniel and Joe Barry Carroll. Are they enough? Who knows? For the first half of the season, the Suns were the league's nightly Mystery Guest. "Who knows what type of team we'll be in March?" coach Cotton Fitzsimmons asked around All-Star time. "Who knows what kind of a team we'll be next week?"

By playoff time, what the Suns want is a very high-octane offensive team that will exert so much pressure on the offensive end that its somewhat laissez-faire approach to defense will be overlooked. After eliminating the Lakers last year, the Suns *should* have beaten Portland but instead wound up with Mike McGee taking a big shot in a key game. C'mon Kevin Johnson, you can do better than that.

4. SAN ANTONIO Well, here's one thing everyone seems to agree on:

"David Robinson may be the best player in the league. He is the greatest athlete ever to play the center position. In fact, I don't think any center is quick enough to guard him."—Mr. Eastern Conference.

"I don't know if they're quite ready to do it unless Admiral Robinson carries them all the way."—Mr. Western Conference.

"David Robinson alone makes them a contender."—Jerry Colangelo

San Antonio will be heard from. Just what people hear depends on the health and depth of the supporting cast. Terry Cummings and Rod Strickland each sustained midseason broken hands. The Spurs were thin enough to begin with, and no team could overcome losses such as Cummings and Strickland in the playoffs.

If the Spurs want to be champions, they must beef up. Unless David Robinson plans on combining the best



Kevin Johnson has to be the one taking—and hitting—the clutch shots for the Suns.

traits of Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain, they won't win three tough playoff series.

The thing is, he might just do that.

5. UTAH The Jazz are better. They gave up nothing and added Jeff Malone, so how could they not be better?

The Jazz are a pain to play. Nobody can deal with Karl Malone one on one, and John Stockton is nothing less than the Bob Cousy of the '90s. Jeff Malone is a superb shooter coming off a pick, and with the Mailman and Mark Eaton, the human solar eclipse, the Jazz can sure set some picks.

But in contrast to the other West biggies, they get fewer easy baskets and no offense whatsoever from the pivot men. They have more grinding games than the other Western contenders, and they have less quality depth than anybody, including San Antonio.

Portland made an in-season move. Phoenix made two in-season moves. Both clubs were better than Utah to start with. The Jazz will have to live and die with their organizational caution.

6. THE REST No team will regard a series with Golden State with glee. K.C. Jones' young turks in Seattle will also give you a workout. The Rockets have their assets. There are no rest stops on the road out of the West.

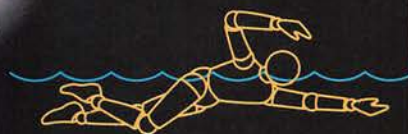
AND THE WINNER IS...

Portland is not what you would call a lock, but it *is* the Blazers' year. Watch out for L.A. And though Detroit is admirable, Boston now has more going for it. Portland over Boston in the finals. ★

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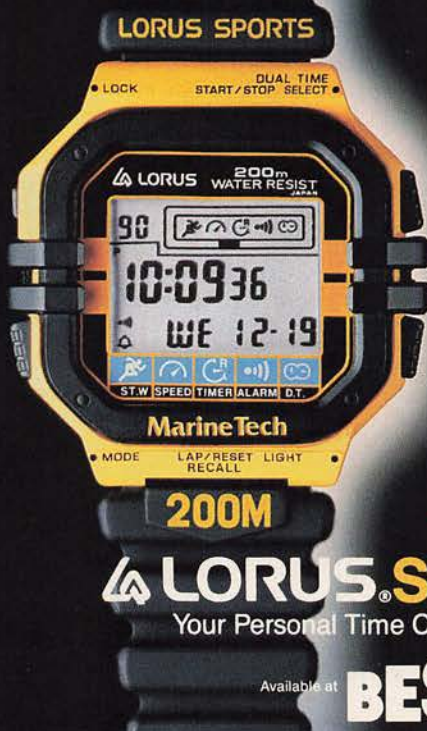


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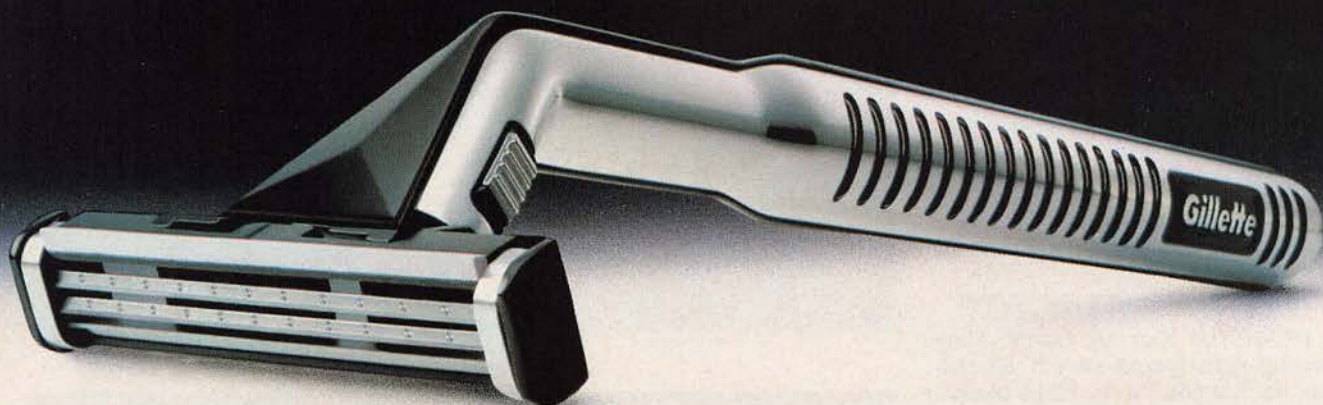


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The best shave a man can get.

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Gillette

The Best a Man Can Get[™]

"I dropped a few F-bombs, but that was after Terry Cooney came out toward the mound and tried to start something."

ROGER CLEMENS



He is baseball's highest-paid player, with a recently negotiated four-year contract extension worth \$21,521,000. He is the major league's winningest pitcher over the last five years, with two Cy Young awards and a Most Valuable Player Award. He has struck out a record 20 batters in

one game and is the epitome of a stopper and franchise player, having compiled a 67-18 career record following losses by his team.

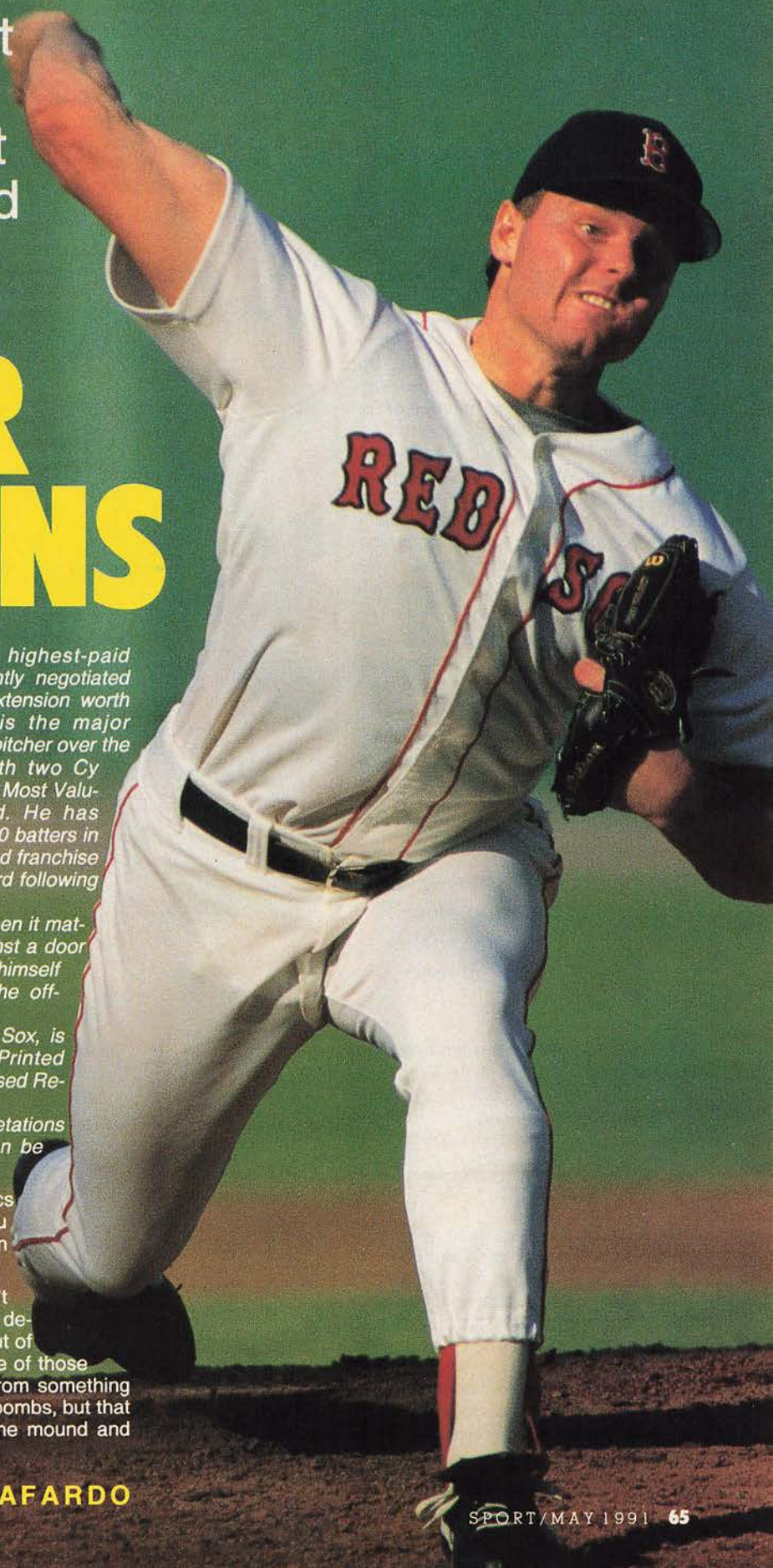
He has also lost his cool on the mound when it mattered most, slammed his pitching hand against a door on the eve of the 1990 playoffs and gotten himself arrested after a brawl with police during the off-season.

Roger Clemens, ace of the Boston Red Sox, is called The Rocket. The Raging Rocket. Printed above his locker in the clubhouse is "Possessed Rebel."

Despite some of the more extreme interpretations of his behavior last fall, Roger Clemens can be thoughtful. He knows what he's doing.

SPORT: Are you embarrassed by your antics in Game 4 of the playoffs that cost you \$10,000 in fines and a five-game suspension to start this season?

CLEMENS: That's not the word for it. I don't think I should feel that. I didn't do anything to deserve a fine or suspension or to be thrown out of a game of that magnitude. I guess it was one of those situations where bad feelings carried over from something else on the umpires' part. I dropped a few F-bombs, but that was after Terry Cooney came out toward the mound and



tried to start something. I was on the mound the whole time. We had questioned a couple of close pitches. I know we're not supposed to show up an umpire, which is why I stayed on the mound. He's the one who made a big deal about it.

SPORT: Some umpires and Oakland players accused you of saying some derogatory things to Bob Welch during the playoffs, alluding to his alcoholism with a "drink milk" comment.

CLEMENS: The second-base umpire said I was shouting stuff out of the dug-out, but I was yelling at [Mark] McGwire, who I know pretty well. There were a couple of guys yelling "drink milk and eat bananas" to Welch, but players always say "drink milk" to players who are considered nervous or fidgety or uptight. Milk and bananas are supposed to relax you. That's why players yell those things and have done so for many, many years. I certainly understand the tremendous thing Bob Welch did in recovering from alcoholism, and I would never shout something derogatory to anybody who has gone through what Bob did.

SPORT: After the fourth and final game of the ALCS, how did you react to media reports suggesting you were a "borderline psycho?"

CLEMENS: People were writing things about me, and they don't even know me. They were writing things that weren't true, and those things bother

"People think everything comes easy to me. Heck, I was the third-best pitcher on my high school team."

you. But I learned a long time ago that reporters are going to write things like that, and you just have to go on. Sure, I'm different on the field than I am the other four days when I'm not pitching or when I'm walking down the street. The day I pitch, I see nobody. I focus on one thing.

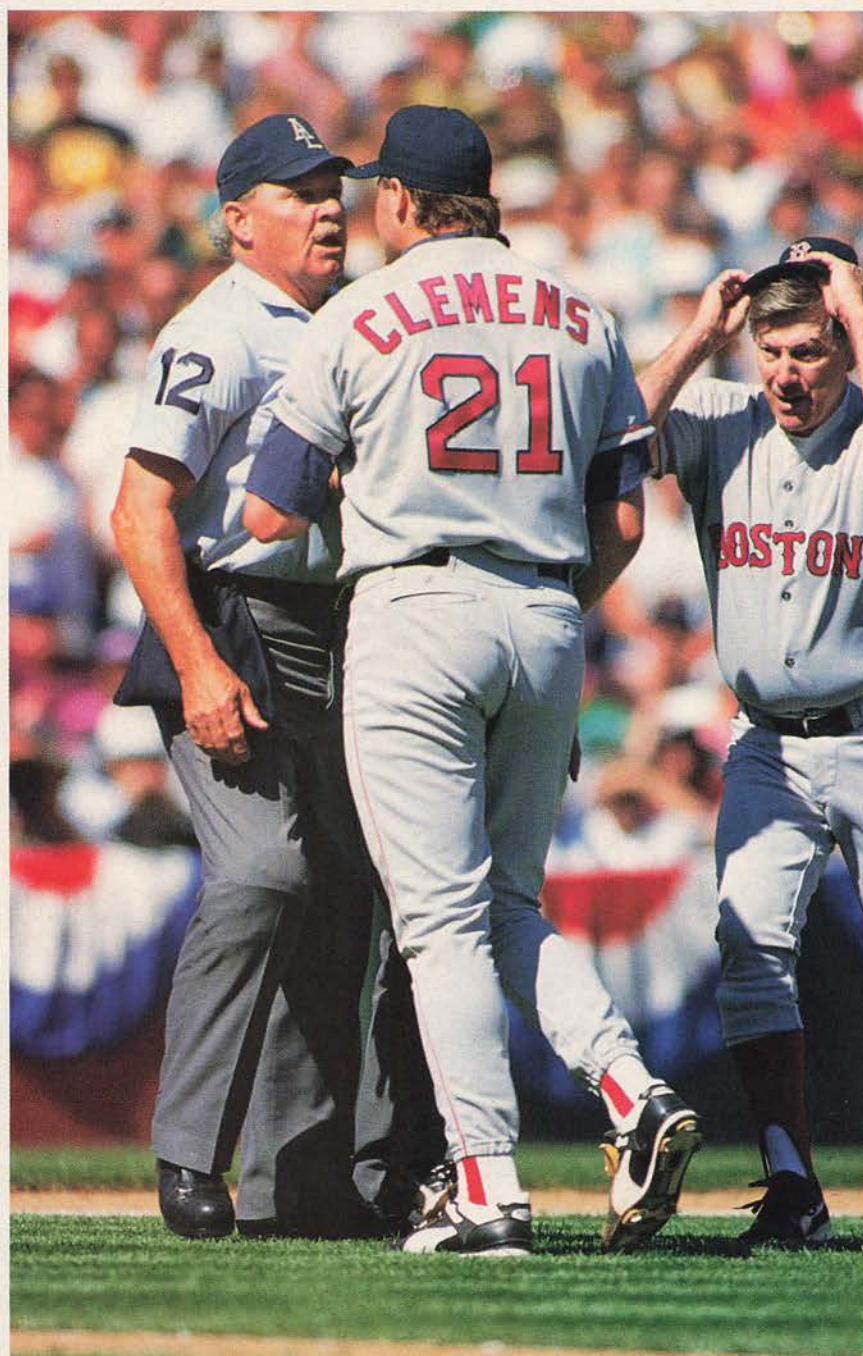
SPORT: You were accused of odd behavior before the game. During warm-ups, you threw a pitch into the stands at the Oakland Coliseum as if you were trying to hit someone. You were running strangely in the outfield, your arms hanging strangely. Then, when you ran into the clubhouse, you knocked over a photographer. Some people wrote you were "stressed-out." Were you?

CLEMENS: I wasn't stressed-out. I was intense. I was preparing myself for

a big game. I knew exactly what I was doing. What's wrong with throwing a pitch away like that just so the opposition thinks you might be a little wild? They're all looking at you warm up. I was trying to put a little fear in their heads. I wasn't trying to hit anyone or hurt anyone. As far as the photographers go, well, they were lined up to a point where it was hard to get through that little alleyway to the clubhouse. All

CLEMENS: I'm not really concerned about what people think around the country. My enjoyment comes from the people around me—my teammates and the people who really know me. The people who write things and say things that aren't true—they don't know who I am. They haven't bothered to know who I am.

SPORT: You've had a stormy relation-



I did was take my hand and push the photographer very gently aside. People make it out like I clobbered him or something.

SPORT: Do you worry about what people think about you?

Clemens insists he's not embarrassed by his antics in last year's playoffs. "I didn't do anything to deserve a fine or suspension," he says.

ship with the media in Boston. You limit your interviews only to the days you pitch, and then there are times you won't talk after a tough loss. Do you think you'll ever be able to enjoy a good relationship with the media?

CLEMENS: I got pissed off at the media in Boston a couple of years ago. I did an interview on a TV station there after we'd lost Bruce Hurst to free agency, and my words came across the wrong way. People thought I was slamming Boston. I love Boston . . . I was criticizing the front office and didn't articulate it. Then I got mad at [the media] after winning my second Cy Young because they took pictures of me in a sports car I'd bought. I was portrayed as a spoiled brat, and that's not me at all. Debbie [Roger's wife] and I are very careful about that. We don't live extravagantly. We come from working families. Nothing has come easy to us. We've had to work hard for everything. That car was my gift for winning a Cy Young. I felt I deserved it. I wasn't trying to show off. That's what gets me. People think everything comes easy to me. Heck, I was the third-best pitcher on my high school team. I had to make a commitment to myself to become a power pitcher. I made myself a power pitcher with hard work. I hope to have a better relationship with the media this year. It's not that I don't like answering questions and talking to you people. I do. I think I blamed everybody, even though I was only mad at two or three. I'm going to learn not to blame everyone, because there are some reporters who cover our team who do a fair job with us.

SPORT: You had a chance to become

"I don't consider myself a big star. I go out and watch Larry Bird and Michael Jordan, and these are the big stars in sports to me."

a free agent following the '91 season and leave Boston, where you've had problems with your image. But you instead negotiated a four-year deal (with an option in 1996) worth in excess of \$5.3 million annually. Everyone figured you'd just pack up and head for Texas.

CLEMENS: The biggest thing for me is winning a world championship. I've won two Cy Young awards, an MVP. I've been to the playoffs for three years



with the Red Sox, and we haven't been able to do it yet. I just think I have the best chance of winning with the Red Sox. Houston is rebuilding. Though I've thought about being the guy to replace Nolan Ryan in Texas, I don't know. That organization isn't making the commitment to winning. Anyway, the Red Sox haven't won a championship in 73 years. Imagine what Boston would be like if they ever won. When that happens, I want to be out there on the mound. And there are a lot of Red Sox records I'd like to break. I'd like to be remembered as being one of the greatest Red Sox pitchers ever.

SPORT: You recently said your deci-

"K" doesn't just stand for strikeout in the Rocket's vocabulary. "K" is for Koby, his older son.

sion to remain in Boston would be based on whether the Red Sox showed a "commitment" to winning. They lost Mike Boddicker to free agency but signed Jack Clark, Danny Darwin and Matt Young. Did they show you that commitment?

CLEMENS: It's too bad the Red Sox couldn't have offered the money they offered to Danny and others to Mike. He would have stayed. It would have

been nice to have Danny and Matt and Mike. Then I'd say, "Wow, we're going to be awesome." I think we have a good team and the Red Sox are committed to winning, but we could use a little more help.

SPORT: Do you enjoy being the *big* star in a sport-crazed city that adores and cherishes its stars?

CLEMENS: See, that's just it. I don't consider myself a big star. I go out and watch Larry Bird and Michael Jordan, and these are the big stars in sports to me. I go out there every fifth day and try to win one ball game at a time. I do my part. Sometimes I don't understand all of the attention I get. I mean, I like it. That's what I love about Boston. People in Boston care about their sports teams. It's very intense. We're all under a microscope, but I think that makes us play better and harder. It certainly makes us better-prepared.

SPORT: You were obviously upset when Dwight Evans was released during the off-season. You now occupy Evans' old locker, which used to be Carl Yastrzemski's. Will you now be the clubhouse leader?

CLEMENS: I've always been a leader by example. Wade Boggs is the same way. He goes out everyday and works his butt off to prepare to be the best he can be. I do the same thing. I think our whole team is like that. We don't want to be embarrassed on the field. That's another thing about Boston. The fans there wouldn't put up with anything but the best. So I guess what we do is we don't allow ourselves to be anything but the best we can. Nobody on this team would let someone not be as prepared as they could be to play baseball.

SPORT: People say you always break down in September. Is there a way to prevent it?

CLEMENS: I've always felt that I needed to pitch well early in the season or the first half of the season. We always seemed to have guys who didn't like pitching in the cold weather—like Mike Boddicker, who really started pitching well when it warmed up. So I always thought my pitching well was very important to getting us to the point where we're in contention by September. Obviously, I don't want to break down at all, and maybe I can work up to that next season.

SPORT: The Red Sox made you go

through a thorough physical before talking about the multiyear contract that would make you the highest-paid baseball player. Did having to go through the exam insult you?

CLEMENS: No, [the Red Sox] had to make sure I was all right. They brought me in and made sure my shoulder strength was good and that I didn't have any tears in the shoulder and stuff. I understand it from their point of

"The Red Sox haven't won a championship in 73 years. Imagine what Boston would be like if they ever won. When that happens, I want to be out there on the mound."

view because there's a lot of money at stake. But even if I do break down, it's not like I'm not going to come back. It's not like me to lay back and not work hard. I've come back sooner than anyone expected every time I've gotten hurt. If I got hurt again, I'd work my butt off to get back. Just like I did after the surgery in 1985.

SPORT: Given how hard you throw and the intensity with which you approach the game, do you expect to have a long career?



PETER TRAVERS

"I'm different on the field than I am the other four days when I'm not pitching."

CLEMENS: I don't think so. I really don't expect to be a guy who pitches beyond age 35 or so. I mean, who knows, with all of the exercises and conditioning programs out there, someone might come up with a program I could go on and keep me active into my 40s. But right now, I doubt it. I just want to be as good as I can for as long as I can.

SPORT: Could you ever change the way you pitch, perhaps more to a Dave Stewart-like style, which doesn't require as much physical exertion as your style?

CLEMENS: My approach is always going to be to go as hard as I can for as long as I can. But I think this year, after I see that Danny Darwin and Matt Young are established in our pitching rotation, the way I might approach it is go a strong seven and pitch a quality-type start and then get out of there. Of course, if it's 1-1 in the eighth inning, I'm gonna stay in there. I say this now, but who knows what happens in the heat of the game? I always thought I needed to preserve the bullpen for the fourth and fifth starters. I always felt like I was the one who had to pitch the complete game or get into the eighth or ninth. One thing I will try to do, and again, I don't know what my mindset is going to be in the heat of the battle, but I'm not gonna be in there with the approach that I have to strike out everybody. I hope to throw the ball lower in the strike zone and get people out other ways. I think that's one way I can preserve myself.

SPORT: Are there any more personal things you'd like to accomplish in your career?

CLEMENS: No. I've won two Cy Youngs, I've won an MVP, and I've struck out 20 in a game. At this point, what I want more than anything is a championship. The 20-strikeout game, I think, really put my name in the national spotlight, and then everything else came after that. But I want to be associated with championship teams. I want people to say, "Oh, yeah, Clemens played on the Red Sox world championship team or two or three back in the '90s." That's what's important to me, and I hope I can get all of our guys on our team thinking that way. We got guys who have accomplished a lot of personal things, like Wade [Boggs], who's won all kinds of batting titles. Wade wants to play on a championship team too. We all do. It would be the greatest thing for the fans of Boston and New England. ★

Nick Cafardo covers the Red Sox for the *Boston Globe*.

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FREE: TARGETS AND 50 REUSEABLE PELLETS

Sure, Raghib Ismail is a semi-lock to be the first player selected in the NFL draft on April 21 and 22, but there are 300-plus other guys who'll get drafted behind him. We could take up this entire issue of SPORT to run down every one of them for you. But if you're like us, you're interested in the best, the guys who are going to make a difference once the season starts.

So here's the SPORT scouting report on the upcoming draft. We rated the draftables Nos. 1 through 3 at each position, along with two special-teams players. We've included all the essential information, plus a special SPORT scouting report on each player. Our

Postseason injury has made some scouts skeptical. Sufficient arm strength, but must improve accuracy and reads. Is very mobile—possesses 4.75 speed and likes to run. A fearless quarterback. (1)

THEY'LL ALSO GO:

Browning Nagle, Louisville (2); **Todd Marinovich**, Southern California (4); **Shawn Moore**, Virginia (4).

RUNNING BACKS

1. Harvey Williams, tailback, LSU, 6-1, 208—Outstanding speed (4.45) with great slashing ability. Has tremendous vision; can find a crease and go.

down back. (1)

THEY'LL ALSO GO:

Robert Wilson (junior), fullback, Texas A&M (2); **Ivory Lee Brown**, tailback, Arkansas-Pine Bluff (2); **Ricky Watters**, tailback, Notre Dame (3).

WIDE RECEIVER

1. Raghib Ismail, Notre Dame, 5-10, 175—Lightning, explosive quickness. High 4.3 in the 40, but tremendous elusiveness. An AFC scout calls him "the closest thing to being a franchise without being a quarterback." (1)

2. Alvin Harper, Tennessee, 6-3, 205—Seven-foot-plus high jumper who has deceiving speed (4.45). A big receiver who has no problems releasing against the press. Scouts say he can power release, swim release or simply run past bump-and-run coverage. Runs excellent routes, will catch in a crowd and

THE SPORT NFL DRAFT PREVIEW

YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST, THE
VERY BEST AND ONLY THE BEST
IN THE UPCOMING NFL DRAFT

By J. David Miller

scouting reports are based on first-hand information and discussions with a number of NFL scouts. We also included at the end of each description the probable round in which that player will be selected.

QUARTERBACKS

1. Brett Favre, Southern Mississippi, 6-2, 220—Jim Kelly mentality. Lost 30 inches of intestines in a car accident before the season, yet came back to play well. Brought USM back to beat Auburn. Teammates rally around him. Scouts rave over his arm strength and gutsy performance. (1st round)

2. Dan McGwire, San Diego State, 6-8, 235—Steadily improved through his senior season. Tremendous arm strength—impressed scouts with his ability to throw different routes. Throws accurate deep ball, but lacks mobility. A classic drop-back passer. (1)

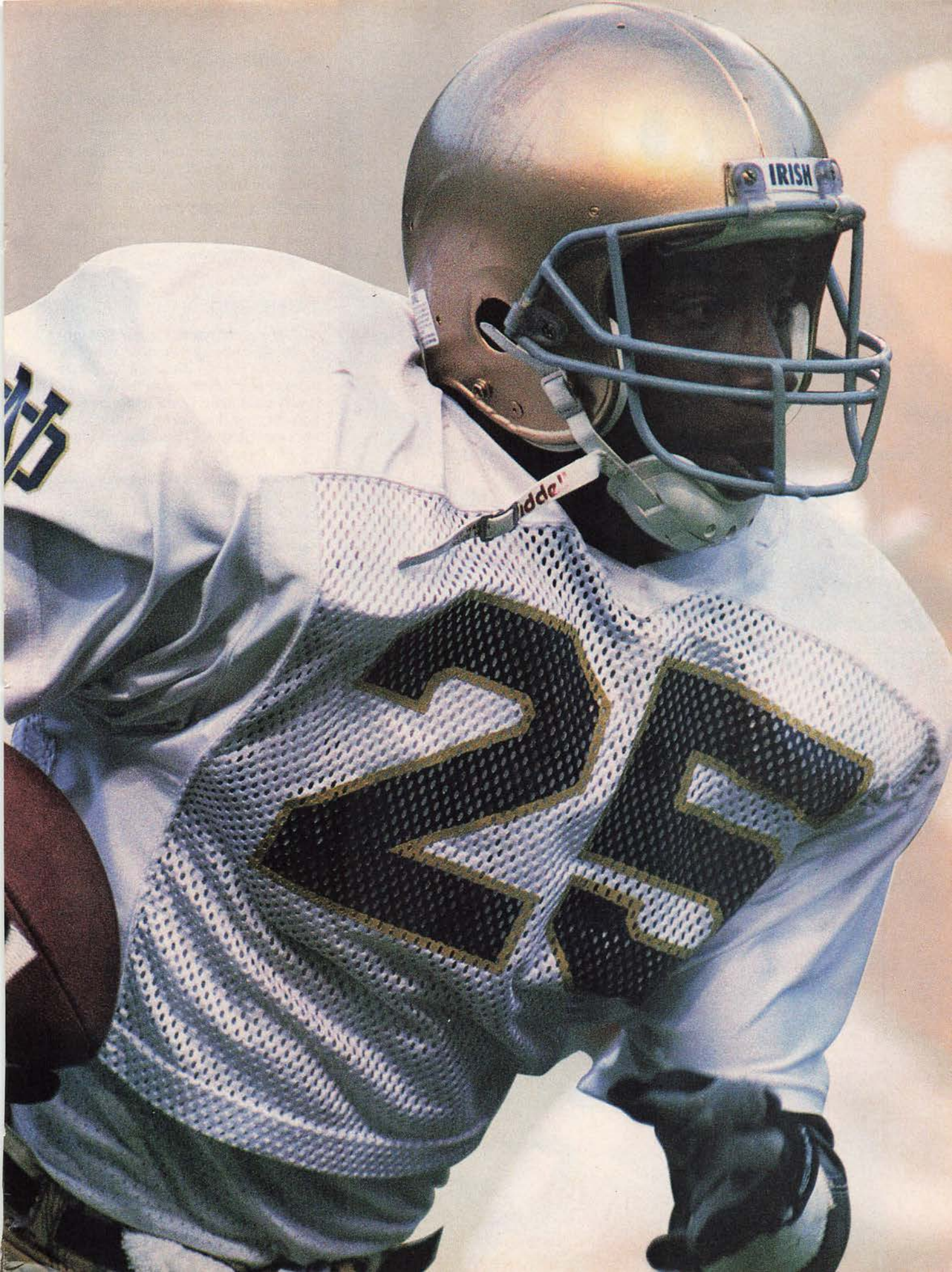
3. Craig Erickson, Miami, 6-2, 196—

Needs to develop tougher inside running skills but has the quickness to bounce outside. Above-average hands as a receiver. As a senior, developed the mental maturity scouts had previously questioned. (1)

2. Nick Bell, fullback, Iowa, 6-3, 255—A track man in the 55 meters, Bell has been called "unbelievable in the open field" by scouts. A real workhorse in the Christian Okoye mold, Bell can easily hold up under a 20-carry-a-game workload. Has unique speed for his size (4.55); can turn the corner. Scouts say his biggest asset is his hands and his biggest weakness is a lack of blocking skills. (1)

3. Eric Bieniemy, tailback, Colorado, 5-7, 195—Sneaky speed at 4.50, and has powerful burst between the tackles and runs with great balance. Protects the ball. Always makes the first man miss. Catching ability is a question mark, but is a tough, physical runner with tremendous potential. Size prevents him from being an every-

Notre Dame's Raghib Ismail:
He's rocketed his way to the top of everybody's list.



YOU THINK THE UMP IS NUTS?

has tremendous ability after the catch. (1)

3. Reggie Barrett, Texas-El Paso, 6-2½, 208—Deceptive speed (4.53), but isn't as polished as he should be. Needs to understand the passing game more, but will catch the ball in a crowd. A1 Toon size a super asset. (1)

THEY'LL ALSO GO:

Derek Russell, Arkansas (2); **Willie Jake Reed**, Grambling (2); **Jeff Graham**, Ohio State (2).

TIGHT END

1. Reggie Johnson, Florida State, 6-2, 255—Tenacious blocker with the speed (4.7) to run the seam. Could be more consistent catching the ball, but is very coachable. Needs more dedication. Scouts question his off-season work ethic but not his unlimited tools. (2)

2. Adrian Cooper, Oklahoma, 6-6, 260—Will make the tough catch and has decent speed (4.85). Must improve his blocking to play in the NFL. Not a Keith Jackson, but is a solid selection who can also play special teams. (4)

3. Chris Smith, BYU, 6-4, 230—A little light, which is evident in his blocking. Catches everything. Runs well (4.75), comes from a passing offense and understands coverage. A Todd Christensen-type player. (4)

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

1. Antone Davis, Tennessee, 6-4½, 317—Runs exceptionally well (5.0). Can play guard or tackle. A dominating run blocker who also has quick feet on pass protection. Struggles with quick countermoves inside, but that can be coached. Occasionally takes a play off; must learn to play every snap hard. Has all the tools to be a Pro Bowler. (1)

2. Pat Harlow, USC, 6-7, 270—Outstanding lineman who will play tackle in the NFL. Excellent speed (5.1), good body control and long, powerful arms. Surprising pass-protection skills for a college player. (1)

3. Charles McRae, Tennessee, 6-7, 291—Good speed (5.2). Transplanted defensive lineman who brings an aggressive mentality to the other side of the ball. Must learn to pass protect and use his hands. (1)

THEY'LL ALSO GO:

Stan Thomas, Texas (2); **Eugene Williams**,

San Diego State's Dan McGwire: A classic drop-back passer who keeps getting better.

GREG BANNER



Colorado's Eric Bieniemy: He won't be an every-down back at his size, but this guy can run.

Iowa State (2); Eric Moten, Michigan State (2).

AL MESSERSCHMIDT

DEFENSIVE LINE

1. Russell Maryland, Miami, 6-1, 271—Will play defensive tackle in the NFL. Productive football player who goes all out and gets upfield with great speed (4.98). Everybody who plays against him double-teams him. "If you single-block him," says a scout, "he beats you." Size, strength and speed reminiscent of Michael Dean Perry. (1)

2. Ted Washington, Louisville, 6-5, 300—Outstanding quickness (5.15). Breaks down well for a large man. Very difficult to knock off his feet with great burst on pass rush. Could play either 40 tackle or 30 end in the NFL. (2)

3. Bobby Wilson, Michigan State, 6-2, 280—Played nose and tackle in college, but will play end in the NFL. A power bull rusher on the pass; maintains constant pressure. Has the speed (4.9) to chase people down. (1)

THEY'LL ALSO GO:

Eric Swann, Bay State (Mass.) (1); Huey Richardson, Florida (1); Chris Zorich, Notre Dame (4).

LINEBACKERS

1. Mike Croel, Nebraska, 6-2½, 226—Tenacious and runs the field exceptionally well. Good speed (4.44). Sheds blockers well, but needs to get stronger at the point of attack. Great wrap-up tackler. Will play outside in the NFL. (1)

2. Alfred Williams, Colorado, 6-6, 229—Has all the tools to play outside in the NFL. Has great upfield burst (4.71). Needs to take his intensity up another level; athleticism alone won't cut it in the NFL. (1)

3. Keith Traylor, Central State Oklahoma, 6-2½, 253—Great size and speed factors for an inside player. Runs 4.69. Had an injury-plagued senior year. Must concentrate more and treat football as a year-round sport. (1)

THEY'LL ALSO GO:

Roman Phifer, UCLA (2); Dixon Edwards, Michigan State (3); Michael Stonebreaker, Notre Dame (5).

DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. Todd Lyght, corner, Notre Dame, 6-1, 184—Will play corner in the NFL. Tough, great burst (4.51), with tremen-



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totally nuts!*

dous man-to-man cover skills. Tried to do too much in college and struggled with nagging injuries. The most skillful corner available in the draft. Is an expert at knocking a receiver off his

route. (1)

2. Jesse Campbell, safety, N.C. State, 6-3, 220—Can play either strong or free safety in the NFL. Possesses great cover ability for a safety. An en-

forcer as a run stopper; loves contact. Must learn to play within a scheme and not just play his own game. (1)

3. Stanley Richard, safety, Texas, 6-2, 200—Has played corner but was

NFC WEST

ATLANTA—Jerry Glanville is looking for a few good men. Offensive and defensive linemen are a priority. A late-season shoulder injury to Chris Miller has left Glanville considering a first-round quarterback. New offensive coordinator June Jones guarantees a 1991 playoff berth.

LOS ANGELES RAMS—Gaston Green has been a failure, though Marcus Dupree could be a refreshing surprise. Look for the Rams to take a tackle-to-tackle running back early (Eric Bieniemy?) and an aggressive defensive back to complement Jerry Gray. "Our biggest needs," says a Rams scout, "are offensive line and linebacker. I'd dance with the devil for Alfred Williams."

NEW ORLEANS—Predictable offense is the Saints' biggest problem; GM Jim Finks' refusal to negotiate with stagnant quarterback Bobby Hebert didn't help. "Hebert, on a bad day, is better than Fourcade and Walsh put together," says an AFC quarterback. "Bobby wants money because he can play. Walsh and Fourcade should both play Arena Football." Look for New Orleans to draft in the offensive and defensive lines and pray that somebody—anybody—can take the snaps. This is a good football team—but how many chances does Jim Mora get?

SAN FRANCISCO—All good things must come to an end, as evidenced by the 49ers' Plan B list. Ronnie Lott, the team's golden boy and defensive leader, will probably be gone by July. "I never intended for this team to not be competitive," says owner Eddie DeBartolo Jr. "I'd like for all my players to be older than me, but it doesn't work that way." The 49ers will look for immediate help in the secondary and defensive line. Tailback will be a draft-day issue too.

NFC CENTRAL

CHICAGO BEARS—Mike Ditka needs to turn loose second-year QB Peter Tom Willis—a late-season shoulder injury to Jim Harbaugh may speed up that transition. Offensive coordinator Greg Landry is a Ditka puppet; the offense desperately needs more creativity. Defensive line is a trouble spot, while aging Mike Singletary will groom young linebacker prospects.

DETROIT LIONS—Wayne Fontes' days are numbered. Without offensive gurus June Jones and Mouse Davis, this team will return to what it once was—horrible. QB Andre Ware is trade bait, but so

far there have been no takers. "He's a bad player," says an AFC scout. "Iraqi SCUDs are more accurate. When he lets it go, you have no idea where it's going." Barry Sanders, who led the NFL in rushing last season in the run 'n' shoot offense, is demanding 30 carries a game. "With their line in normal offense, he'll be dead by Week 8," says a current Big Ten coach. The Lions need everything—offensive line, defensive line, secondary, wide receiver and linebacker. Good luck, Wayne—soon you and Ray Perkins can battle it out for the Mississippi State job.

GREEN BAY PACKERS—Lindy Infante made chicken salad out of chicken gizzards the past two years. He needs linebackers,

secondary people, linemen on both sides of the ball and a running back who can carry the ball 20 times a game. Packer backers should back off. Infante can win, but executive vice president Tom Braatz must give him some help. "We need a Harvey Williams and a corner," says a Packers scout. "But when Braatz drafts, it's like throwing darts at the wall. We don't know what we're getting."

MINNESOTA VIKINGS—Herschel Walker needs a new career (bobsleding?), Wade Wilson needs to learn accuracy and Jerry Burns needs a smile. The NFL's most talented team got "blocked" again last year, and the reason was simple: Too many individuals, not enough team. "There is no 'I' in team," Vince Lombardi once said—and Burns should know. The Purple Pounders will draft a back, offer Herschel in a trade and pick up a defensive back. If history truly repeats itself, they will spend a ton of money and fail at all three.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS—Richard Williamson may be a good guy, but he was a poor choice as a head coach. If bad decisions had a museum, Hugh Culverhouse would be the curator. Vinny Testaverde might be colorblind, but he couldn't play if he *could* see. Running backs Gary Anderson and Reggie Cobb and the secondary are solid. But without an O-lineman here, a D-lineman there, this team is the stuff losers are made of. Again.

NFC EAST

DALLAS COWBOYS—Jimmy Johnson's hair didn't move, but his offensive coordinator did—David Shula took off for Cincinnati when Johnson blamed him for his club's inconsistent performance on offense. The problem, though, is QB Troy Aikman, a great talent, but a young, immature player whose completion percentage reflects those qualities. WR Michael Irvin needs to catch as well as he dances. The Cowboys need depth everywhere—offensive and defensive lines, secondary, another receiver and linebackers. Stay tuned.

NEW YORK GIANTS—They won it all, thanks to Bill Parcells, who did it with mirrors. Running back has been an inconsistent position—look for Rodney Hampton to step up to a full-time role. Depth at wide receiver is a gaping problem, while quarterback will soon be a bad situation. Phil Simms, on his worst day, is better than Jeff Hostetler—but

(Continued on page 76)

WHO NEEDS WHAT

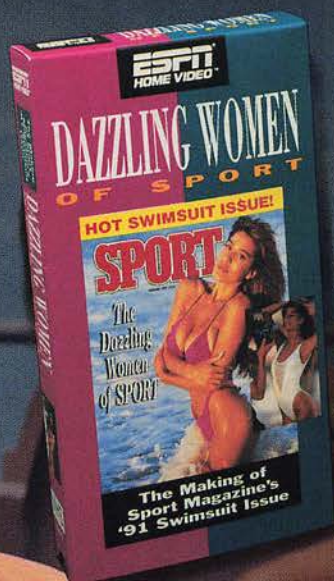
HOW EACH NFL TEAM NEEDS TO PREPARE FOR THE DRAFT

By J. David Miller



The Cardinals could use another pass-rushing end to complement Dexter Manley.

Dazzling Sizzling Revealing



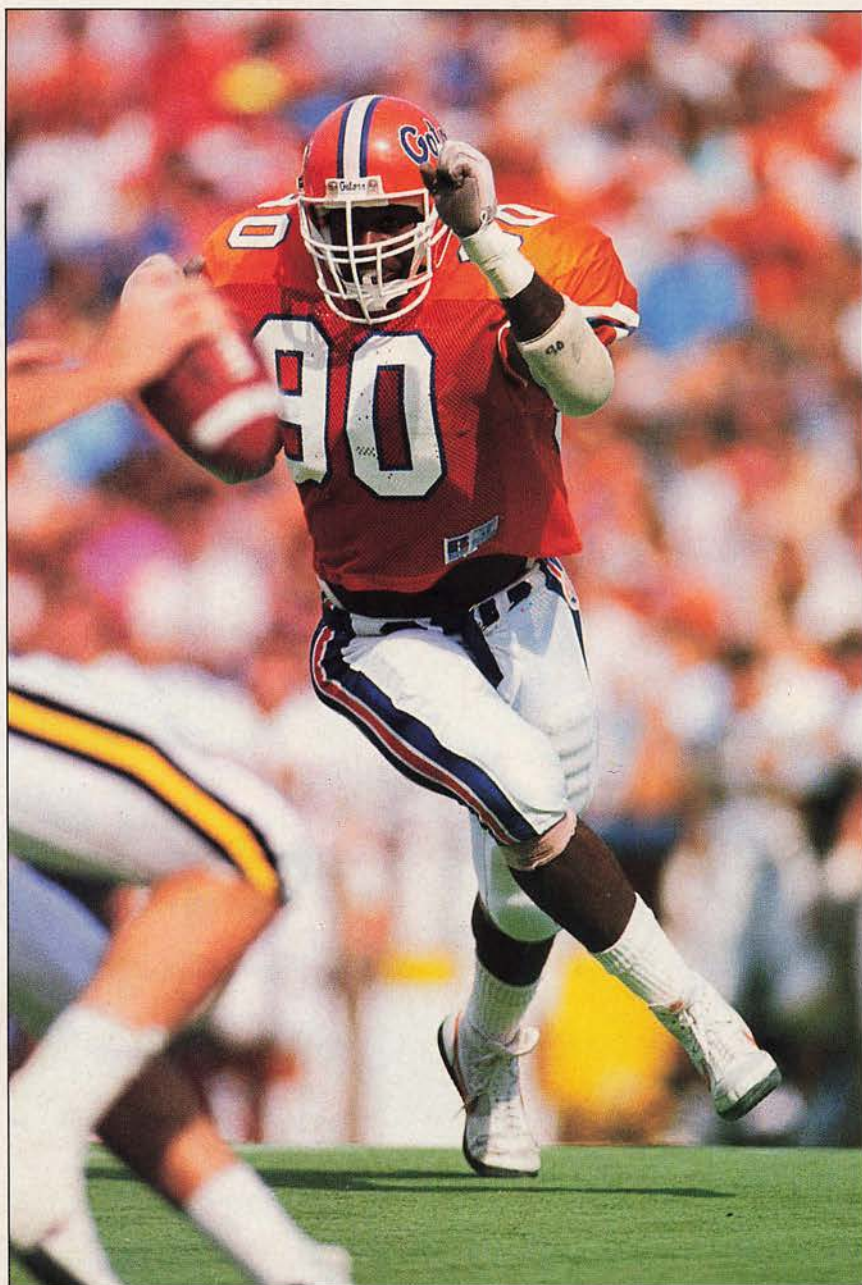
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Florida's Huey Richardson: A fast former linebacker who'll play defensive end in the NFL.

moved to safety. Has decent speed (4.55) and moves well in traffic. Has great ball awareness and down cover ability. Very instinctive against the run. Needs to break better in one-on-one tackling situations. (2)

THEY'LL ALSO GO:

Aeneas Williams, corner, Southern University (2); Darryll Lewis, corner, Arizona (2); Dexter Davis, corner, Clemson (2).

SPECIAL TEAMS

For slug-mouth fans, here are two defensive backs who will play as rook-

TOM DIPACE

ies for one reason—they are devastating special-teams players:

1. Mike Dumas, safety, Indiana, 6-1, 180—An outstanding kick blocker—has blocked nine in his career. Will make an instant impact on special teams. Former All-Big Ten corner who moved to safety in senior year. Had a 99-yard interception return against Purdue but didn't score, perhaps an indication that his speed could improve (4.55). Has great ball awareness and is an intimidating run supporter. (2)

2. Steve Jackson, cornerback, Purdue, 5-9, 182—A 4.5 kick returner, Jackson throws his body around on kickoff coverage and run support. Outstanding kick blocker. Will chase people down from across the field for touchdown-saving tackles. (2) ★

WHO N

(Continued from page 74)

both are old. Giants will draft—and groom—a younger quarterback and will be thankful a guy with a corkscrew wind-up could get them through a Super Bowl.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES—Naming Rich Kotite head coach was like putting a Band-Aid on a brain tumor. The Eagles have it all—talent, athletic ability, depth—but lack leadership. Nobody will step forward and take charge. The tight-end-oriented offensive scheme is anti-creative; only the improvisational ability of Randall Cunningham made it work. With the outstanding wide receivers this team has, it should be scoring more. Bud Carson should be a calming force on defense—perhaps enough to save Kotite's job for a few years.

PHOENIX CARDINALS—First-year coach Joe Bugel was a tremendous motivator in the morale department in '90, but he had help from several young stars, such as Timm Rosenbach and Johnny Johnson. This team frantically needs wide-receiver and secondary help, while another pass-rushing end—to complement Dexter Manley—wouldn't hurt. What this team lacks most is simply experience.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS—Head coach Joe Gibbs wants another Kelvin Bryant-type player. Biggest needs are in the secondary and linebacking corps, as well as depth on the offensive line. An every-down running back such as Iowa's Nick Bell and a young wideout could ease the burden on some aging stars.

AFC WEST

DENVER BRONCOS—Dan Reeves does everything well—except lose. Look for the Broncos to rebound hard in '91, as they look to the draft for a cornerback and a pass-rushing defensive lineman. With a shortage of good college tight ends available, Reeves might turn to Plan B for ideas (Mike Mularkey?).

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS—Owner Art Modell is still cutting his losses in Cleveland, while the man he didn't think could coach—Marty Schottenheimer—is gearing up for his second-straight playoff appearance in Kansas City. With Steve DeBerg doing his best Joe Montana impersonation, young Mike Elkins may not get a chance for several more years. This team is a wide receiver and a defensive back away from being a dominating AFC force.

LOS ANGELES RAIDERS—Jay Schroeder's magic act went up in smoke in the playoffs. This team needs a real quarterback. The Titanic duo of Schroeder and Buerlein has had its chances, but

NEEDS WHAT

apparently Al Davis is willing to go down with that ship. This team needs to cultivate some young players on both the offensive and defensive lines—nose tackle Bob Golic is currently older than some NFL referees. Other needs are linebacker and defensive back.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS—With such young talent as Anthony Miller and Billy Joe Tolliver, this team should be winning more games. GM Bobby Beathard has been loyal to former Redskins assistant Dan Henning, but Henning could screw up a one-car funeral. The H-back offense has gone the way of the hula hoop—but Henning won't budge. The Chargers need a running back, another receiver and linebacker help. Beathard will find the talent; the question is, with Henning as the head coach, does talent really matter?

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS—Chuck Knox showed great flexibility last season as Seattle just missed the playoffs with some marginal talent at key positions. The Seahawks covet a strong, pass-rushing linebacker and defensive-line help. A power-hitting safety such as North Carolina State's Jesse Campbell would be a coup. Back-up quarterback Kelly Stouffer has yet to outplay Dave Krieg, who has the worst release in football but still gets it done.

AFC CENTRAL

CLEVELAND BROWNS—New coach Bill Belichick walked into a fire storm, but unlike his predecessors, he may be young enough to survive it. The Browns need players everywhere, and the most obvious place is quarterback. Bernie Kosar played hard, but his body is shot. "When we played him, he was just awful," says an AFC Central assistant. "I felt bad for him. We actually told the D-line to go easy on him." The Browns also need a tight end now that Ozzie Newsome has retired.

CINCINNATI BENGALS—The Bengals are so talented that they should concentrate less on their cutesy (but horribly inconsistent) offense and just line up and play. Sam Wyche spends so much time trying to trick people that he's overlooked the fact that this team could probably run the 'bone and win nine games. This team has depth, but age will soon be a factor on the defensive side.

HOUSTON OILERS—If speed were oil, the Oilers would be the sheiks of the NFL world. In the run 'n' shoot, though, you can never have enough. If there's a blazing receiver available, Houston may bite. Unlike departed Glanville, coach Jack Pardee seems content to quietly put up with bumbling GM Mike Holovak, who

talks more to himself than his associates. Offensive-line depth and a defensive back are pressing needs.

PITTSBURGH STEELERS—It's amazing that Chuck Noll refuses to admit he made a mistake by embracing the man who made the Jets perennial losers. Joe Walton and his lack of offense has crushed the morale of Pittsburgh's young talent. Yes, this team needs receivers. Yes, this team needs a dominant defensive lineman. But more than anything, it needs to lose Joe Walton on a road trip.

AFC EAST

BUFFALO BILLS—The Bills are deep and will just get deeper. A young wide receiver and another young safety are priorities, but they aren't pressing needs. This team is in the enviable position of drafting the best player available. The front office has done a brilliant four-year job of building this club.

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS—Perhaps Eric Dickerson's true value was revealed when the Colts entertained offers for him last year—and didn't get any positive responses. Indy needs linebackers and defensive linemen in the worst way—the Giants flew through the Colts as if they were the Iraqi air force. Jeff George needs more heart to go with his superstar potential.

MIAMI DOLPHINS—Same song, different year. The Dolphins are a few defensive players away from being contenders. The new focus on the running game worked well against weaker teams, but against better defenses, Dan Marino found himself in a familiar role—throwing on every down. The wideouts are getting old and punchy; injuries riddled Miami's receiving corps last year. A solid draft could put Miami in the hunt for Buffalo.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS—Ahem. Dick MacPherson? With the plethora of talented, young NFL assistant coaches available, the Patriots dipped into the college ranks and... didn't even take the best college guy available. Pick a position and the Pats likely need it. The new coaching staff should appreciate owner Victor Kiam, who successfully diverts the wrath of the media away from football operations.

NEW YORK JETS—The best news here is that Joe Walton is still gone. The bad news is that Bruce Coslet still needs more players to win. Coslet did liven things up considerably. The Jets played exciting football even when they were trailing by 30. Defensive-line help is a must. Linebacker and secondary needs follow close behind.

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"I've gotten a distaste for athletes who come on with that old 'thank-you-Jesus' thing. Like somebody trying to convince his wife that he loves her."

It is Sunday morning, almost 10 o'clock. Reverend George Edward Foreman is standing by the steps of his church, greeting members of his flock as they enter. His giant's pate gleams, with rivulets of sweat running down his forehead and the sides of his face.

It's only a few minutes before the service starts, and Foreman is the last person to enter the room. Inside, there are six rows of dark oak pews; the capacity is perhaps 75 people, although there aren't half that many in attendance today. "It's a family church," he had earlier explained, meaning that most of the regulars are genetical-

understanding without being told that the subject of his story was Muhammad Ali.

It is exactly one-fifth of a mile from the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ to the George Foreman Youth and Community Center, where the former heavyweight champion trains to box. The proximity of the church to the gym tells much about the Reverend Foreman and his twin religions of Christianity and pugilism.

"I've gotten to where I am," he says while unlocking the door to the gym, "because I'm the hardest-working fighter in the world. I train all the time, seven days a week."

This is a different Foreman from the one we've seen in the media—the jolly old fat guy who "trains" between plates of chocolate chip cookies and platters of hamburgers. When Foreman isn't performing, he is meditative and unrelentingly calculating. He mostly eats broiled chicken and fish, steamed vegetables and fresh fruit, and drinks bottled min-

GEORGE FOREMAN: THE NEXT HEAVY- WEIGHT CHAMP?

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FOREMAN
By Davis Miller

ly related to him or are long-time friends.

Throughout a sermon more energetic than evangelistic, unfocused yet pragmatic, the 43-year-old Foreman prowls back and forth, much in the manner of the young lions he once kept as pets. His dominating presence is undeniable as he tells oblique stories about his years before having been saved and about his post-salvation life. He warns his congregation not to take that drink on Saturday night and not to lay down with that inviting stranger. He preaches for about 30 minutes.

"Some people don't even believe in a supernatural god," he says in a rich, Southern voice as he finishes. "I wouldn't serve a god who wouldn't speak to me. I was talkin' to a fella one time, and he told me he turned toward somewhere and prayed eight or nine times every day. I said, 'Man, does God ever speak to you?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'Hey, brother, ain't nobody home.'"

Everyone in the room laughs,

eral water. And, yes, he does train hard and steadily, though in a fairly unusual fashion. Foreman says that one of the keys to victory in his upcoming April 19 world heavyweight title fight with champion Evander Holyfield is the unique manner in which he does his roadwork.

"I saw Archie Moore, my trainer, with a heavy bag on the back of his truck, giving a boxing clinic to kids. I thought, man, I can use that. I hook me a bag on the back of a pickup and go way out in the country. Archie drives, and I run behind that thing, punching. Sometimes as much as 10 miles, all the time punching and moving."

Upon entering the gym, Foreman ducks into a locker room, from which he soon emerges. He walks toward the six 150-pound heavy bags hanging at tortured angles, their thick, black leather covers split open in places and nearly ripped from their bodies. As he steps through the room, he sings softly to himself:

"Old man river, that old man river, he keeps on rolling, just keeps on rolling along."

Slowly, sonorously, he sings this fine and simple old tune. As he approaches the largest and newest-looking big bag, he stops singing and becomes almost catatonically quiet. This is now the primordial George Foreman. He takes on an ancient and intrinsic there-is-power-in-my-silence demeanor. His attention returns to the bag.

He punches once every half-second in flat-four time, an amazing 360 punches per round. Sweat quickly covers his brow, dancing across its surface, occasionally taking flight. He steps into the bag with short, little lefts and rights. Each punch is light yet sure.

At the beginning of the fourth round, he begins varying his



Foreman says he pounds the heavy bag rather than sparring partners because they can't handle the punishment.

WILL HART
rhythms and starts launching heavy artillery. He becomes a funky metro-nome, keeping the same underlying meter but developing an unpredictable, jazzlike syncopation. His punches are not crisp but concussive.

It is tough to watch Foreman on the big bag and not remember January 22,

"I've gotten to where I am because I'm the hardest-working fighter in the world. I train all the time, seven days a week."

1973. On that day, champion Joe Frazier was knocked down six times by the middle of the second round. The brutal display ended with an abortive escape attempt by Frazier as Foreman clubbed him behind the ear with a back-alley hook that lifted him off his feet and threw him to the canvas like a discarded rag doll.

Now, almost 18 years later, the bag seems to sigh as Foreman steps away at the end of the 12-round session.

"The average guy, say Holyfield, can rehearse in sparring whatever he's gonna do in a fight," says our sly former champion as he prepares for the continuation of his routine. "To practice what I need to do, I'd have to get a new slew of sparring partners every day. Nobody can take my power. I can only load up on the heavy bag."

Then he tackles eight rounds of shadowboxing, four rounds of rope work and 45 minutes of lifting weights. When it's all over, I tell him I'm surprised by the intensity of his training. "I haven't even started yet," he says.

At the time of my visit, it is five months before the Holyfield bout. Most boxers train six weeks for a contest. "If people want to believe I don't work hard," says Foreman, "then let them. It's only to my advantage."

I ask if the "people" he's just referred to are Holyfield and the current champ's trainers, George Benton and Lou Duva. He nods and says, "Among others." I wonder how the 18-to-1 underdog intends to contend with 28-year-old Holyfield's youth, speed and stamina.

"I'm a different fighter than the one-dimensional guy from 1974," he says. "If you look at my recent fights against [Gerry] Cooney and [Adilson] Rodrigues and Ken Lakusta, you'll notice the other guys always hit me first, and I catch them in the middle of it and get my knockout. That's all the speed that matters."

He then proceeds to explain that stamina won't be much of a factor, since he intends to KO the undefeated, unfloored champion. I remind him that the guys he has been flattening during his second coming aren't exactly the elite of the heavyweight division.

"You're right," he says, matter-of-factly. "There are fighters out there that George Foreman don't want a taste of. But Holyfield and [Mike] Tyson aren't two of them. I got the style to beat both these guys. No one's noticed what I do is different from the '70s. I throw little pitty-pat punches until a guy gets used to it, like, 'That's all old George has got.' Then I start the heavy shelling.... I imagine the referee'll step in and stop [the fight] in the second or third round."

I'm curious about what Foreman thinks of Holyfield personally. Will it bother him to be duking it out with a fellow Christian?

"Boxing is my job," he says. "I keep religion separate. I've gotten a distaste for athletes who come on with that old 'thank-you-Jesus' thing. Like somebody trying to convince his wife that he loves her, and he doesn't."

As we stand to leave, I ask him to confirm that the story he told from his pulpit this morning was about Muhammad Ali.

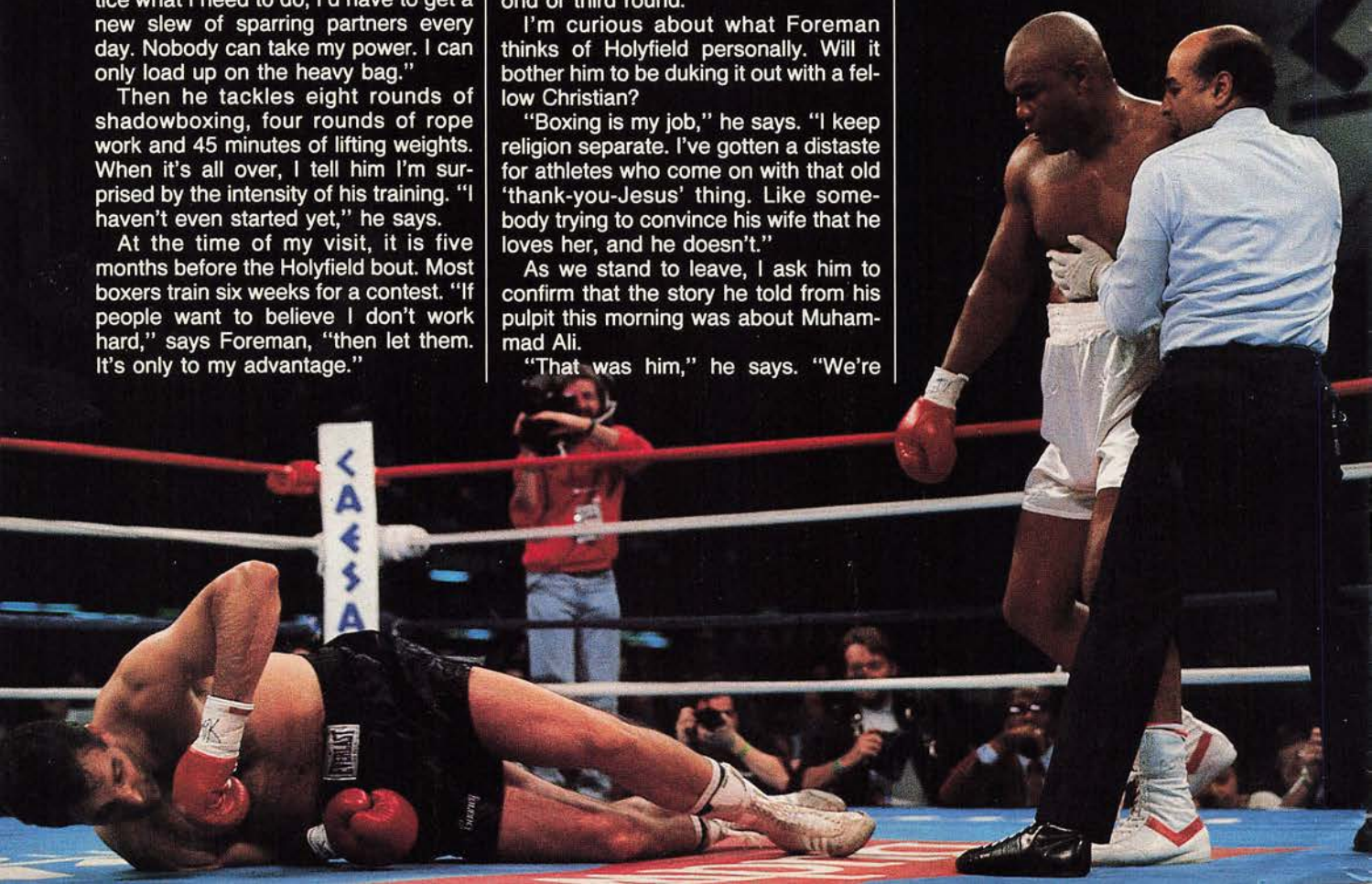
"That was him," he says. "We're

good friends now. He's a very special fella. But it's like this—I know the hand of God is on him. He's been told, 'Hey, you been callin' the wrong man.' Most of his greatest gifts have been taken away from him, like putting a microscope on a fly and a pair of tweezers. Take a wing, take a leg... until there's nothing left. God only takes a man up for one reason: to cut him down. That's why I try to stay in the basement. I don't never want to be nothin' but a human being that makes mistakes."

Foreman's non-metaphorical basement is in a house in a tiny subdivision in Humble, Texas, near Houston Intercontinental Airport. The single-story brick ranch-style home is nearly as modest as the name of the town in which the former champ resides.

When I ring the doorbell, his wife answers. Joan Foreman is a native of the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, where her husband sometimes trains for fights. The fifth Mrs. Foreman is short

Cooney went down easily halfway through the second round last year, but such pushover matches reveal little of Foreman's true potential—whatever that might be.



and thin and young and quiet. She directs me to take a seat on a large pink and gray sofa in the living room.

A recent unframed LeRoy Neiman sketch of a smiling, tuxedoed Foreman is displayed in the center of the fireplace mantle. On the floor is a picture; it's turned face down. I pick it up. It's a fading photograph of the young champion, circa 1974. He has a mustache, pork-chop sideburns and a full head of hair, much of it hidden by a salmon-colored floppy cap. He is glaring at the camera.

While I study the photo, Foreman walks into the room. "That fella," he says, "is dead and gone."

The born-again heavyweight is barefoot and shrouded in a loose-fitting gray tunic.

"The old fella who's gone, he watched Sonny Liston, other tough guys, [and] learned to be vicious from them. When I joined the ministry, I had to start throwing all those imitations away. Even my mustache was an imitation of Jim Brown. Now I'm just me. I shaved my face and even shaved my head," he says, rubbing his shining dome and laughing. "It feels better, feels clean."

He's really one of the most likable athletes of our time; he's simple in the best sense of the word and sincere. But his public image reflects only the bizarre performances so appreciated by the media, a schizophrenic gulf between appearance and reality.

The night before, Foreman had attended a Houston Rockets game, and the franchise management delivered a complimentary extra-large pizza to his seat in the stands. Local TV stations had been briefed, and they all played the film at 10. I ask if being portrayed as a clown bothers him.

"Not really," he says. "Nobody means any harm. I don't even take myself serious. It's a game. It's sports. I can't stand it when athletes take themselves so serious. If people want to hear a joke, they must need a joke. They get plenty of seriousness, plenty of hardship, in their own lives. That's the reason, when I'm on television, I

never get serious. When they flip that camera on, it's like 'Showtime.'"

As he says this, he hauls himself up and does a kind of ponderously graceful, circus elephant's dance around the room.

I suggest that if he beats Holyfield, it's likely he'll become the most popular boxer since Ali. And that if he doesn't watch himself, corporate types will try

"The only thing that frightens me about fighting Evander Holyfield is that I might hurt him."

mean, I like life. I want to be in it. I want to get on with it. Twenty-four times I been in the ring this time out [his comeback], and I've lived every moment of it.

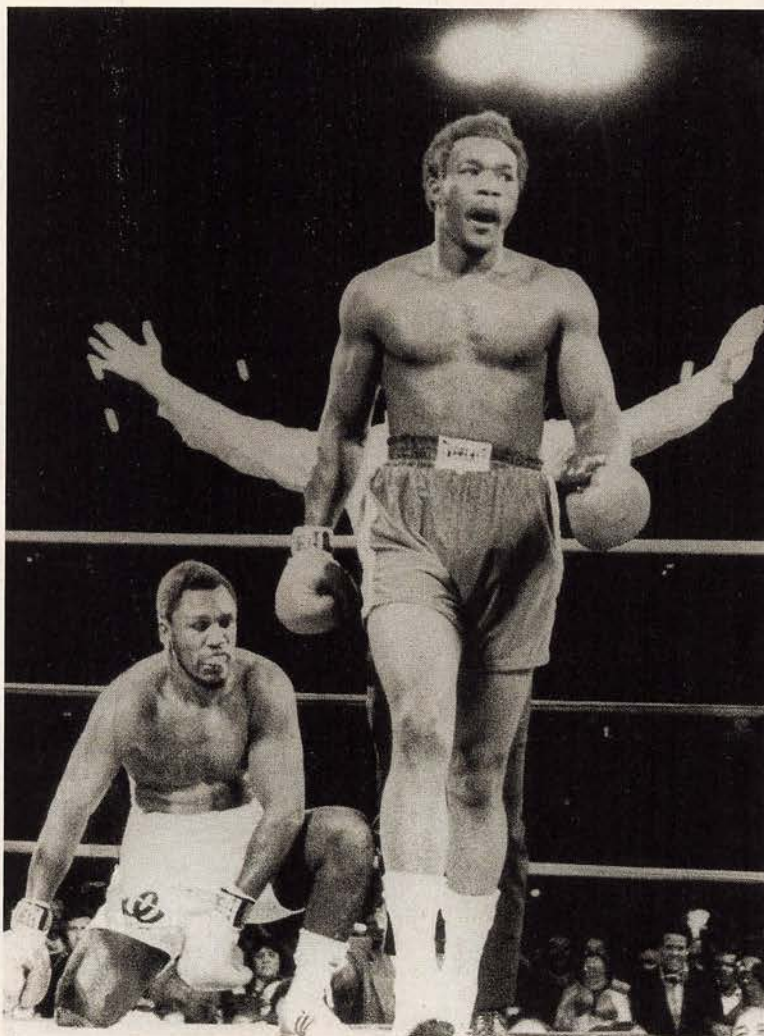
"My only real ambition is to think like nothing's a sacrifice. To sacrifice something is to make yourself dead. I'm not gonna focus on any one thing in life anymore. When you do that, you cut yourself off from this big, big world. A life can be snapped away from you just like a smile on a face."

This seems like the perfect time to ask the question that boxers in training for big fights are never supposed to answer. "Should you lose," I ask, "will it ruin your life, like it did after losing to Ali?" After being knocked out by Ali in October, 1974, Foreman hounded Ali for years, hoping for a rematch. After he and Ali both retired, they'd occasionally run into one another and have their own friendly jihad, each trying to convert the other. Foreman says that in being floored by Ali, he first became aware of his own mortality. Nearly 17 years after the event, he still

hasn't completely gotten over his loss to The Greatest. But he doesn't expect a similar situation with Holyfield.

"You're looking at a guy who's been champ of the world, lost the championship of the world. I've had life from every angle," he says. "That's why I'm not even worried about losing. The only thing that frightens me about fighting Evander Holyfield is that I might hurt him. I don't want to ever hurt anybody. The people around Holyfield think this is some kind of joke. They don't know."

"I want to become champ of the world, and that's it. My only goal," he says firmly. "Otherwise I'm all finished. I'm complete. I just want to live as long as I can and help as many people as I can ease their burdens." ★



When he won the heavyweight title in 1973, Foreman dropped Joe Frazier in the second round. He hopes to do the same to Evander Holyfield.

to replace Aunt Jemima's syrup-bottle face with his.

"That might be true," he says. "But my major intentions are to never do any commercials. I've had people call me, tell me what great deals they can offer me. I am able to say no."

"The world's not about walking down the street with a big smile splashed all over your face. It's not what TV tells you it is. [Life] hurts most of the time. There's nothing wrong with that. I

SPORT QUIZ

How's your sports IQ? The famous SPORT Quiz has been separating the savvy fan from the weekend wimp for decades. See how you do with these 13 questions. Then check the answers below for your score, and rate yourself as follows:

12-13 correct: Sports genius
9-11 correct: Good fan
6-8 correct: Working too hard
3-5 correct: To the showers
0-2 correct: Try knitting

SPORT
MAGAZINE

ANSWER THE SPORT STUMPER AND WIN A SPORT PIN. No matter how you do on this month's quiz, we'll send you the SPORT pin pictured here if you send us the correct answer to the SPORT STUMPER given below. Send only your name, address and age to SPORT Quiz, 8490 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069. Limit one per person, and all entries must be postmarked by April 15, 1991.

1 This Atlanta Braves pitcher (pictured) has the distinction of winning an ERA title during the 1970s. Who is he?

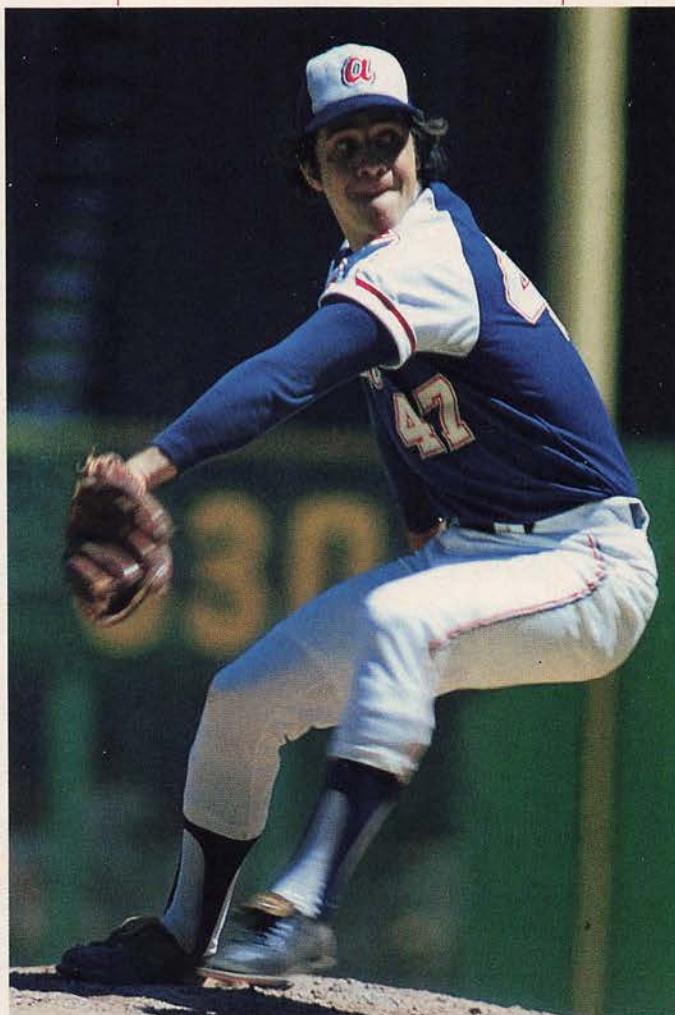
2 Rick Sutcliffe once led the American League in ERA during his career. True or False?

3 Which player has won the most National League home run titles?
A. Ralph Kiner
B. Hank Aaron
C. Mel Ott
D. Mike Schmidt

4 Mark Messier was one of two Edmonton Oilers to tie for the team lead in points during last year's Stanley Cup playoffs. Name the other player.
A. Craig Simpson
B. Jari Kurri
C. Esa Tikkanen
D. Glenn Anderson

5 Name the coach who guided the Boston Bruins to the Stanley Cup title in 1972.

6 Which quarterback led the NCAA Division I-A in passing efficiency during the 1990 season?



FOCUS ON SPORTS

STUMPER

Who is the only tennis player to win the Grand Slam twice?

THIS MONTH'S QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Buzz Capra (he led the National League with a 2.28 in 1974) 2. True (Sutcliffe led league with a 2.96 ERA for the Cleveland Indians in 1982) 3. D (Schmidt won eight home run titles during a 17-year career) 4. A (Simpson and Messier were tied with 31 points) 5. Tom Johnson (he guided the Bruins to a six-game victory over the New York Rangers in the 1972 Stanley Cup playoffs) 6. A (Moore led the division with a 160.7 rating) 7. A (Hudson averaged 149.27 yards per game for Oklahoma State) 8. C (Fenner had 14 rushing touchdowns for the Seattle Seahawks) 9. Mike Schuler (Schuler won the award for the 1982-83 season) 10. D (Jones won the award for the 1982-83 season) 11. A (Carmacho KO'd Limon in the fifth round) 12. Graig Nettles and Reggie Jackson (Nettles won the crown in 1976 with 32 home runs; Jackson batted out 41 to win the title in 1980) 13. Len Barker (he led the American League with 187 strikeouts)

A. Shawn Moore
B. Ty Detmer
C. Dan McGwire
D. David Klingler

7 Which running back led the NCAA Division I-A in yards per game in 1990?

A. Gerald Hudson
B. Eric Bieniemy
C. Darren Lewis
D. Mike Mayweather

8 Name the running back who led the AFC in rushing touchdowns in 1990.

A. Thurman Thomas
B. Marion Butts
C. Derrick Fenner
D. Marcus Allen

9 Who did Rick Adelman replace when he became coach of the Portland Trail Blazers during the 1988-89 season?

10 Who was the first NBA player to be honored with the Sixth Man Award?

A. Bill Walton
B. Kevin McHale
C. Ricky Pierce
D. Bobby Jones

11 Who did Hector Camacho defeat to become the WBC Super Featherweight champion in 1983?

A. Bazooka Limon
B. Ray Mancini

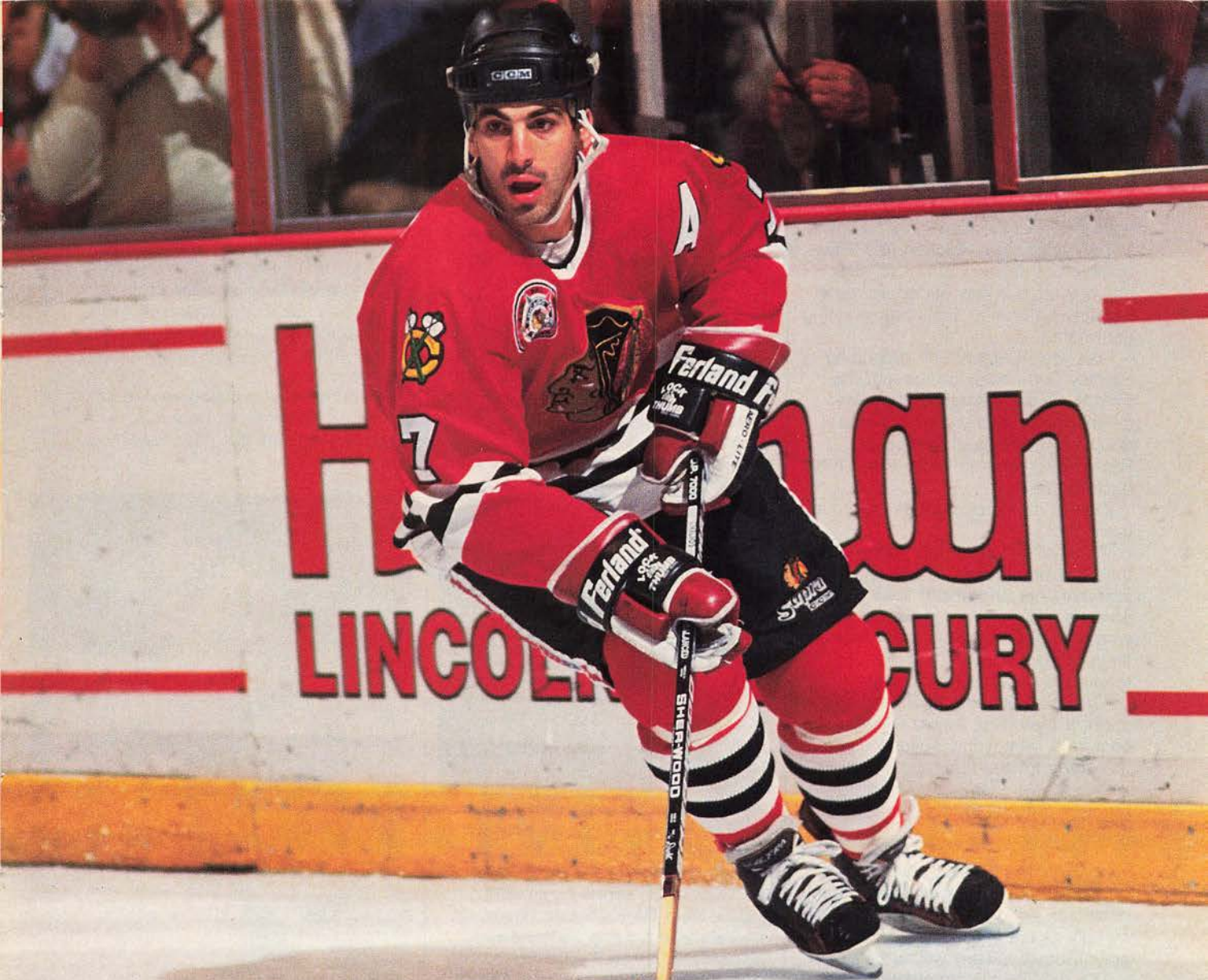
C. Rafael Solis
D. Edwin Rosario

12 Since 1970, only two New York Yankees have led the American League in home runs. Who are they?

13 From 1976-79, Nolan Ryan led the American League in strikeouts. Who ended the streak?
—William Ladson and Raymond Harper

APRIL 1991 STUMPER ANSWER

Joe Frazier ("Who became the undisputed heavyweight champion after WBA champ Muhammad Ali was stripped of his title in 1967 for refusing induction into the U.S. armed services?")



TEN THINGS THAT ARE GOING
TO HAPPEN DURING THE
STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS . . .
GUARANTEED

By Steve Rosenbloom

THE SPORT NHL PLAYOFF PREVIEW

So what's going to happen during this year's Stanley Cup playoffs? All kinds of things, many of which you can't predict.

But there are some that you can. Here are 10 things that definitely will occur this spring. Guaranteed.

1 FIRST THINGS FIRST *At least one of the four division winners will be upset in the first round.*

Since the NHL began its present divisional playoff system in the spring of 1982, a division champion has been wiped out of the playoffs in the first round—the first round—by a fourth-place team 15 times in the 36 series. That's a ridiculous failure rate of nearly 42 percent.

And it has happened at least once every year. Sometimes this curse, or evil mojo or whatever it is, goes bonkers.

In 1982, with the first-round series a best-of-five, three first-place teams took it between the eyes: Minnesota got carved up by Chicago, Edmonton was

Chicago's a major Stanley Cup contender since Chris Chelios stabilized the Blackhawks defense and became a locker-room leader.

stunned by Los Angeles, and Montreal was bloodied by provincial rival Quebec. Same thing happened in 1986, the year before every series was best-of-seven. Chicago and Quebec were swept by Toronto and Hartford, respectively, and Philadelphia went down to the New York Rangers.

Two years ago, Chicago and Philadelphia not only wiped out division champions, but they ended up reaching the conference finals before being sent home.

Last year, Calgary, the defending Stanley Cup champion, bought the farm in six games against Los Angeles, having its season end on a double-overtime goal that Mike Krushelnyski scored while lying on his back in the slot.

Kind of dangerous, those first-round games.

"They're not any more dangerous than any other round," Chicago general manager and coach Mike Keenan says. "But a lot more would be written about it because the expectations are higher, and [first-place] teams are expected to do more."

"There's nothing guaranteed in sport. If there was a guaranteed success rate, why would anyone come to the arena for the first round?"

The problem isn't coming to the arena in the first round. The problem is leaving it.

2 SAVING FACE They are as much an NHL postseason tradition as low scores and can be as ugly as high ticket prices. They are playoff beards. They will surface.

The deal is, players shave before the first playoff game and not again until their teams are told to take their sticks and go home. So they start out looking like Don Johnson. If they're lucky, they end up looking like Moses.

"I had one the last year we won the Cup in New York [with the Islanders in 1983]," says Greg Gilbert, now with the Blackhawks. "By the end, I looked really ugly. I wish I hadn't grown it."

At least Gilbert's capable of growing a beard. There are some who don't even bother trying.

"Are you kidding? Look at this," Chicago's Trent Yawney said last year, pointing to two days' stubble that looked like an aerial view of a forest in dire need of reseeded.

Montreal's Denis Savard usually grows one, but "I shave in between series," he says. "I get zits and stuff."

Chicago's Jocelyn Lemieux doesn't have a problem with acne. Color, maybe, but not acne.

"I only grow one during the play-

offs, but it comes out red," says the brown-haired Lemieux. "I also grow it when I go fishing. Of course, I don't even shower when I go fishing."

Fortunately, playoff hygiene has its limits.

3 GO THIRD AND BE ELIMINATED Did your favorite team finish third in its division? We're awfully sorry. It's been 19 years since a third-place finisher collected the Stanley Cup.

4 THE GREAT ONE WILL DO WHAT THE GREAT ONE ALWAYS DOES Wayne Gretzky will set some kind of playoff record. He already owns most of the significant marks, such as most points in a



The postseason is unpredictable, but there are always a few sure bets. For one, traditional playoff beards, such as the one Ray Bourque (above) fashioned last season, will sprout across the league. Then there's the guy from nowhere who runs up big numbers. Last season, it was Washington's John Druce (right) and his 14 goals. And don't forget Wayne Gretzky (far right), who always sets another record.

career and in a series, and most assists in a career and in a series. The record he's most likely to set this spring is for most career playoff goals. He held it for a while, but former Oilers teammate Jari Kurri passed him last year. Gretzky begins the playoffs with 89 goals, three behind Kurri.

Other career records the Great One can sniff include hat tricks (he's tied with Hall of Famer Maurice "Rocket" Richard at seven), game-winning goals (two behind Richard's 18) and short-handed goals (one behind Mark Messier).

And if Gretzky doesn't break a record this year? Then that too will be a record.

5 BLUE HEAVEN Bet on the team that has blue in its uniform. Really. Fourteen of the last 15 Stanley Cup champions have

had blue somewhere on their logos or jerseys. Only the Calgary Flames messed up this near-perfect trend when they won the Cup in 1989.

If you're looking for a team just to reach the finals, then include gold or orange. Ten of the last 11 losers in the finals wore one of those colors. Only Montreal screwed that up, and come to think of it, that also occurred in 1989, when the Canadiens lost to the Flames. So if you throw out 1989, you've really got a good thing working for you—blue to win and yellow or orange to lose.

Of course, we'd caution you about betting on Winnipeg to beat Pittsburgh in the finals this year. Or any year.



6 OUTTA NOWHERE This one's a lock. Some guy you'd never expect, probably someone you've never heard of, is going to come up huge in the playoffs.

Last year, it was Washington's John Druce. In 45 games during the 1989-90 season, Druce accounted for all of eight goals. Then, boom. He destroyed New Jersey and the Rangers, helping the Capitals get out of the Patrick Division for the first time in their history. He finished his 15-game postseason with 14 goals.

The year before, it was Chris Kontos of Los Angeles. Here's a guy who played in New York, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Tulsa, New Haven, Muskegon and Europe, and never scored more than eight goals in any NHL season. So what happens? Kontos faxes his signed contract to the Kings from the country store in some God-forsaken part of Ontario, then hooks

up with Wayne Gretzky and scores eight goals in seven games as the Kings eliminate the Oilers.

Pick a year. How about 1986? Montreal calls up Claude Lemieux for the last 10 games. He scores one—count 'em, one—goal. In the playoffs, he rips off 10—four of them game-winners—and the Canadiens win the Stanley Cup.

7 COME ONE, COME BRAWL

Hey, it wouldn't be the NHL if there wasn't at least one game in which the teams littered the ice with equal measures of laundry and blood. Most likely, you're going to see some sort of melee in the first or second round. That's when divisional ri-

That way, the critics will point out, you wouldn't have Boston, Buffalo and Montreal finish with three of the top four records overall, like they did last year, and guarantee that at least two of them will go no farther than the second round. Besides, the reformers will add, you won't see the same teams playing each other every year.

In fact, a conference playoff format seems fairer, but the NHL would lose a significant part of its playoff character. The league's current format has created a tremendous amount of intensity in the first two rounds *because* the same teams play each other every year. You've got all kinds of combustible animosity going on now,

get to the big dance. To actually win the Cup is, in abridged form, a 3-D production: defense, discipline and depth.

Nobody except the Edmonton Oilers has won the Cup with a skate-'n'-shoot approach, and even the Oilers knew how to play defense. While discipline is a huge part of playing defense, it's also having the smarts to stay away from stupid penalties and the willingness to take a slash to the ankles without retaliating. And with the possibility of having to play 28 games in 55 days, a team has to have quality depth; if one injury is all it takes to kill your team, then you probably don't have much of a chance to start with.



IPA GABRIEL

vals, who are pretty sick of each other after seven or eight meetings in the regular season, have it out.

"In the first round," says Rangers general manager Neil Smith, "fourth-place teams have to find a way to beat better talent [on first-place teams]. That [brawling] might be the only way. You've seen those teams win series that way. But that team will get knocked out pretty quick because the talent only gets better as you move on."

8 CONFERENCE CALL Some team, maybe even a lot of them, will make noises about changing the playoff format to a conference setup, and scrapping the present divisional number. The idea would be to take the top four finishers in the Adams and Patrick divisions, for instance, and rank them Nos. 1 through 8, based on points.

something that would get defused if a change was made.

9 KEENAN FODDER Mike Keenan is going to bench a star player. It might be center Jeremy Roenick; it might be defenseman Chris Chelios; it might be goalie Ed Belfour. Whoever, it's going to happen.

Last year, Keenan benched flashy center Denis Savard so often, it was news when Savard didn't spend most of a period in the front row.

Something else about Keenan. Whatever he does will work. It always does. The guy might not get good grades in working and playing well with others, but he wins.

10 AND THE WINNER IS... It's one thing to win your division in the regular season. It's another to come out of it in the playoffs. And it's still another to

So who draws the highest marks in these areas and others such as special teams and size? The pick here is the Chicago Blackhawks.

Before the season opened, we liked the Hawks to reach the finals, but we didn't think Chicago could win it. They added the savvy and outstanding Chelios on defense, created the perfect opening for Roenick to meet his wonderful potential and generally displayed the most punishing work ethic in the league. The only question was goaltending, and that's been answered by Belfour. So we like the Blackhawks a whole lot more now.

And, like we said, all Keenan does is win. He's won championships at every level—even with a senior-league team—and he's due to pick up the NHL's most elusive piece of hardware. ★

SPORT SCOPE

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF BASEBALL

It's fascinating to see what some players can—and can't—do. Some hit for a high average but can't drive in runs. Some whack home runs and knock in runs at an astronomical pace but can't even crack .245. The following lists show players who were highly productive in a key offensive category and unproductive in another in the same season.

PLAYERS WITH 100 OR MORE RBIs, FEWEST HOME RUNS (POST-DEADBALL ERA, 1920-90)

NAME	TEAM	YEAR	RBI	HR
1. PIE TRAYNOR	PITTSBURGH	1931	103	2
2. BILLY HERMAN	BKN. DODGERS	1943	100	2
3. PIE TRAYNOR	PITTSBURGH	1927	124	3
4. LARRY GARNER	CLEVELAND	1920	115	3
5. JOE SEWELL	CLEVELAND	1923	109	3

BATTING TITLISTS, FEWEST RBIs

NAME	TEAM	YEAR	AVE.	RBIs
1. MATTY ALOU	PITTSBURGH	1966	.342	27
2. RICHIE ASHBURN	PHILADELPHIA	1958	.350	33
3. PETE RUNNELS	BOSTON	1960	.320	35
4. RICHIE ASHBURN	PHILADELPHIA	1955	.338	42
5. BILL MADLOCK	PITTSBURGH	1981	.341	45

PLAYERS WITH 100 OR MORE RBIs, LOWEST BATTING AVERAGE

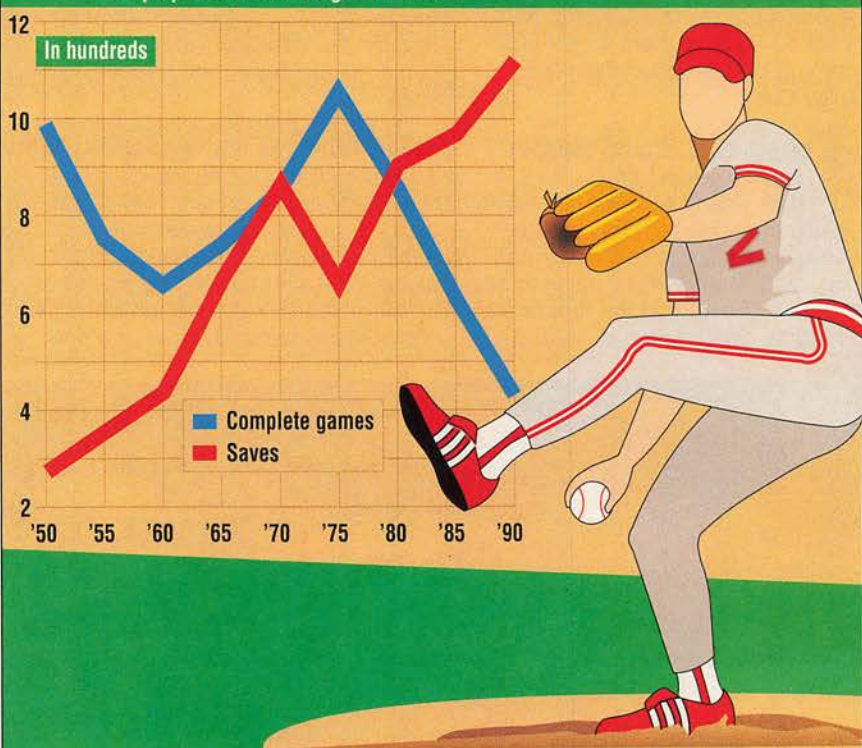
NAME	TEAM	YEAR	RBI	AVE.
1. TONY ARMAS	BOSTON	1983	107	.218
2. JOE CARTER	SAN DIEGO	1990	115	.232
3. ROY SIEVERS	WASHINGTON	1954	102	.232
4. MARK McGWIRE	OAKLAND	1990	108	.235
5. CARLTON FISK	CHICAGO	1985	107	.238

PLAYERS WITH 35 OR MORE HOME RUNS, LOWEST BATTING AVERAGE

NAME	TEAM	YEAR	HR	AVE.
1. DAVE KINGMAN	N.Y. METS	1982	37	.204
2. TONY ARMAS	BOSTON	1983	36	.218
3. DAVE KINGMAN	N.Y. METS	1975	36	.231
4. MARK McGWIRE	OAKLAND	1990	39	.235
5. DAVE KINGMAN	N.Y. METS	1976	37	.238

The Impact of the Closer: The Complete Picture

The emergence of the relief ace has turned the game into a seven-inning duel and made a complete game a rarity. Saves have increased while complete games have declined — except in the early '70s, when the DH was established and there was a preponderance of 20-game winners.

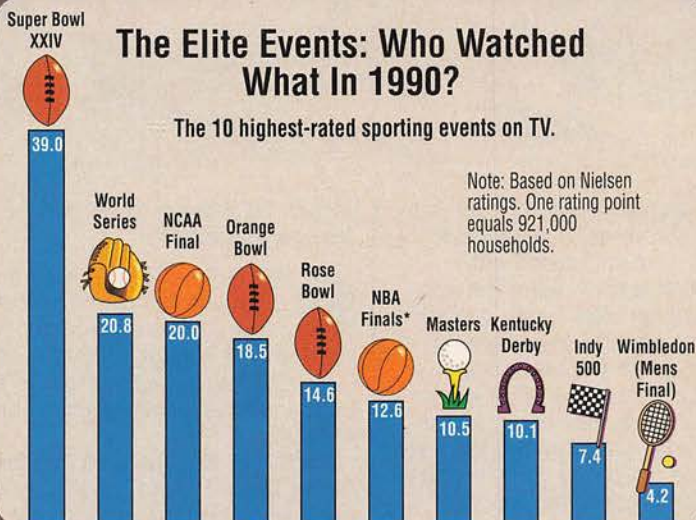


CHARTS BY TRACY CALVERT-JANITZ

The Elite Events: Who Watched What In 1990?

The 10 highest-rated sporting events on TV.

Note: Based on Nielsen ratings. One rating point equals 921,000 households.



*4 Prime-time games only

SPORT ODDS

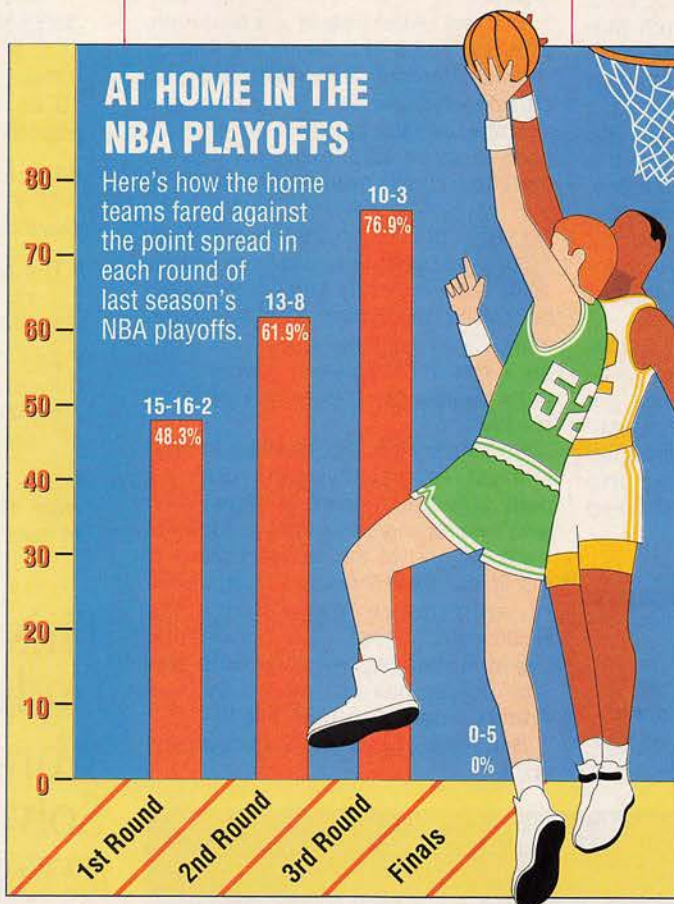
For a while in the mid-1980s, picking winners in the NBA playoffs was just about as easy as finding out who the home team was. All you had to do was put down a few bucks on the home team and then sit back and enjoy the results. From 1984 through 1988, the homers were 200-159 against the point spread in the playoffs for a 56-percent winning percentage.

But home cooking went sour after the 1989 season. The home team covered in only 16 of 51 playoff games, a dismal 31 percent. It was the worst performance ever by home teams against the spread in the NBA playoffs.

Things got a little better for the homers last year, as they covered 38 of 72 games (with two pushes) for a respectable 53 percent. Still, the most heavily bet playoff series is the finals, and the home team won exactly *zero* games against the number last June. The home team is clearly no longer a solid play for wagers.

What happened? One of my theories for the closing of the gap has to do with the officiating. The road team is starting to get a better shake from the officials in enemy territory. I think we have commissioner David Stern, under whose brilliant guidance the NBA playoffs have become a major sports "happening," to thank for this. Stern, of course, doesn't care about point spreads, but he was concerned about the alarming rate that home teams were winning straight up. It's my belief that Stern has made it clear to the referees that anything resembling a hometown call is taboo.

No referee would admit that he could be intimidated by a hostile crowd, but these guys are human, and the crowd has had at least a subliminal impact. But now, with what I perceive to be



pressure from the commissioner's office, I believe the refs will overcompensate, and the roadsters will cover the spread enough for a profit. I would not be inclined to wager on a road favorite (which seldom exists anyway). But I would watch the road dogs during this year's playoffs.

This season, my early 8:5 favorite to win the title is Portland. Not only did the Trail Blazers spend most of the season completely dominating the league, but you should remember that they had the Pistons on the ropes in the finals last year after splitting a pair in Detroit. With the painful sweep by Detroit on their home court behind them now, the Blazers have what it takes.

I put both the Pistons and Boston Celtics as my second choices at 2:1. The Celtics were supposed to be rebuilding, but they've turned into the surprise team of the year. What's surprising is not only their winning ways, but how they're winning. With the return of Brian Shaw from Italy and the blooming of first-round pick Dee Brown, the Celtics can push the ball up the court as well as any-

body. If Larry Bird's back makes it, this team certainly can go all the way.

Everybody in Pistonland is shouting "threepeat," but even before Isiah Thomas' playoff presence was put in doubt, the Pistons were no shoo-in. On the other hand, they're no shoo-out either.

The next tier comes in at 3:1, and it includes the Bulls, Suns and Spurs. Chicago is always a threat to soar to the top aboard Air Jordan. Phoenix has point-guard extraordinaire Kevin Johnson and made an excellent acquisition in Xavier McDaniel. The X-Man can play with anybody. San Antonio will always be in the neighborhood of best

PICKIN' THE PLAYOFFS

AT NBA
CRUNCH TIME,
THE HOMERS
ARE NO
LONGER SURE
THINGS

By Danny Sheridan

teams as long as David "Mr." Robinson is at center stage.

In the next echelon, I rate the Jazz and the Lakers at 5:1. With Karl Malone, Utah can always deliver the mail. The addition of Jeff Malone to John Stockton's backcourt makes the Jazz better than last year's rendition. The Lakers have been tough most of the season and still have Magic Johnson. When they started that huge winning streak in January, the Angelenos served notice that they're not to be ignored this year. However, the loss of Pat Riley will show in the playoffs.

At 10:1 are the 76ers and the Bucks. Charles Barkley and Rick Mahorn provide the muscle for Philadelphia, but the rest of the team is too thin, especially the bench. Milwaukee started off with an astonishing 18-game win streak at home, but the Bucks' so-so

performance on the road will make it tough for them to get by Chicago or Detroit.

The rest of the league is a field entry at 200:1, and that includes the Knicks, Hawks, Warriors, SuperSonics, Rockets and whatever other team manages to sneak into the playoffs. Believe me, each of these field teams will only be there to fill up its arena for a brief fling.

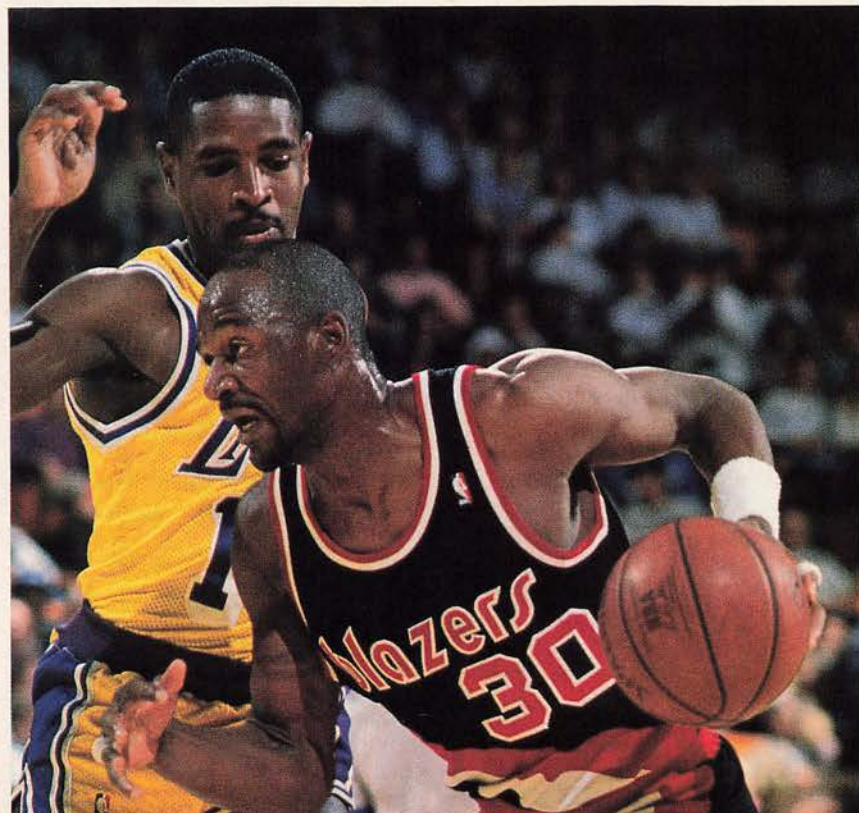
My prediction this year? Well, last year I prefaced my pick by saying Brent Musburger would be calling the action with his trademark, "You are looking live..." sign-on. I was immediately 0-1 when CBS fired Musburger before the playoffs started.

So let's try it again, keeping in mind that NBC will be carrying the NBA's big party. It will be marvelous Marv Albert who'll be saying some time in June, toward the end of the seventh game of the finals, "Rod Strickland, with a pretty spin move past Bird... to Robinson... Yes!... and it counts! David Robinson, with his 39th and 40th points, has just sealed the San Antonio Spurs' first NBA title."

San Antonio over the Celtics in seven. ★

Terry Porter and the Portland Trail Blazers beat the spread twice on the road in last year's finals—and then lost three straight as home favorites.

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SHERIDAN'S FREE THROWS

- The Philadelphia 76ers were 1-10 vs. the spread in last year's playoffs.
- The Portland Trail Blazers were 4-10 vs. the spread in last year's playoffs.
- The San Antonio Spurs were 7-1-1 vs. the spread in last year's playoffs.
- The Detroit Pistons, Chicago Bulls and San Antonio Spurs were a combined 19-2-1 vs. the spread at home in last season's playoffs.
- The rest of the playoff teams were 19-32-1 against the spread at home in the playoffs last year.

This Month's Dodge **SPORT** Word Puzzle Solved.

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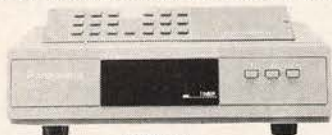
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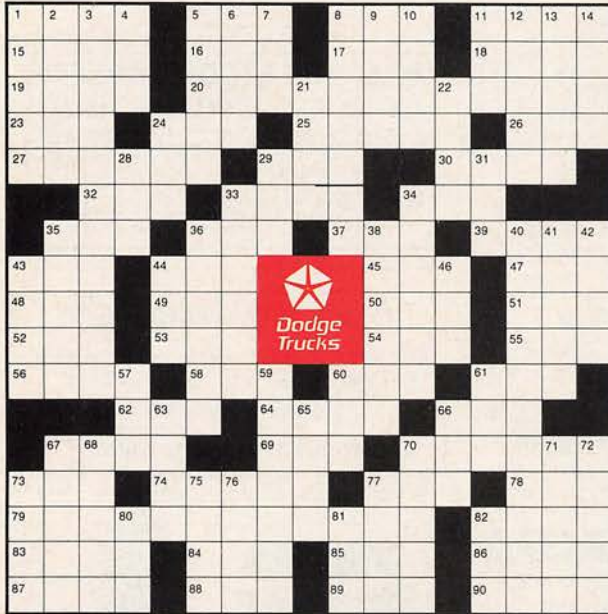
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The Dodge SPORT word Puzzle

By Stanley Newman

"25 YEARS AGO IN SPORTS"



Puzzle answers on page 88

Across

1. Hair-cream amounts
5. In favor of
8. Tony Tubbs' nickname
11. Meal for the humiliated
15. Garfield's canine pal
16. Wade Boggs' pride: Abbr.
17. _____ Speedwagon (rock group)
18. Where the Iditarod ends
19. Outfielder Murphy
20. Cooperstown inductee of 1966: 2 wds.
23. Pee Wee's infield mate
24. Part of ACC: Abbr.
25. Second-place finisher
26. Pass receiver
27. "Iron glove" stats
29. Southwest Conference team
30. Broadcasts
32. Channels 14 and up
33. Boxing's 10-point _____ system
34. Letters after Q
35. Half a figure eight
36. 1/15 of a quarter: Abbr.
37. Jackson or Miller
39. The basics
43. Hot-air balloon filler
44. George Burns role
45. _____ streak (winning): 2 wds.
47. Team coached by John Mackovic: Abbr.
48. '89 Independence Bowl winner: Abbr.
49. Knicks' home-court initials
50. Have title to
51. Bill "The Spaceman"
52. Tennis-tie term
53. Top pitcher
54. "The _____ Hungarian" (Al Hrabosky)
55. Young fellow
56. "The Bronx Zoo" author
58. Carl Hubbell's teammate
60. World Series co-MVP in '81
61. Author Rand
62. Compass point: Abbr.
64. Authorize
66. Fly ball's path
67. Stadium opened in '64
69. Part of UNLV: Abbr.
70. Eight-ball rituals
73. "A Boy Named _____"
74. They first competed in the Boston Marathon in '72
77. Kite or Watson
78. _____ Paulo, Brazil
79. NCAA basketball winner in '66: 2 wds.
82. HemisFair Arena player
83. Fruit drinks
84. Hitting instructor Charlie
85. Jar top
86. Ballpark unit
87. '90 World Series "sweeper"
88. Granatelli goo
89. Foreman stats
90. Hall of Fame outfielder Speaker

Down

1. "ADVANTAGE: _____"
2. 1960s Orioles infielder Jerry
3. His NBA coaching career started in '66: 2 wds.
4. Catch sight of
5. Reporter's quest
6. Racetrack shape
7. Some offensive linemen: Abbr.
8. Spring-training activities
9. Kevin Costner role
10. Carry around
11. Ted Turner's network
12. Clemens or McDowell
13. Signs of the future
14. Fuse metal together
21. Shade trees
22. Southpaw's stats
24. Canine comment
28. Sadaharu's family
29. Arizona NBAer
31. Call _____ career (retired): 2 wds.
33. Eddie Gaedel was one
34. Bowling approach area
35. 300-game winner Wynn
36. Five-nation swim meet site of '66
38. He won the decathlon in '68
40. U.S. Open golf winner in '66: 2 wds.
41. _____ and jerk (weightlifting)
42. Iditarod vehicle
43. Gretzky one-pointer
44. A.M. TV show, for short
46. &
57. Ram's mate
59. Improves one's physique: 2 wds.
60. Cleveland cager, in headlines
61. "Who do you think you _____?"
63. Carpenter's tools
65. Reliever Tekulve
66. Kind of wrestling
67. Leather variety
68. Placed a jinx on
70. Baseball's Bobby or Barry
71. _____ King (Preakness winner in '66)
72. Alphabetizes
73. Sports headliner
75. Temple U. athletes
76. Thickest part of the bat
77. Threesome
80. Donkey
81. Lodge brother
82. Fast plane: Abbr.



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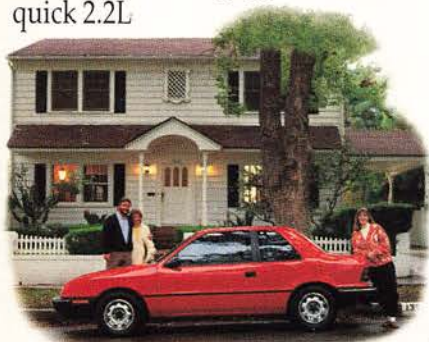
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